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EILEEN OF THE TREES

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By

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TO THE PLEASANT MEMORY OF

JANE FORD

GOOD ON THE ROAD AND GOOD ACROSS COUNTRY, WHOSE BACK I BROKE IN PARKERS MEADOW WHILE FOLLOWING THE HOUNDS DECEMBER 12TH, 19—

AND IN THE 20TH YEAR OF HER AGE.

PART I

EILEEN OF THE TREES

CHAPTER I

THE claret-coloured limousine with an earl's coronet on the door panels pulled up at the Spence Arms and Charlie Simmins, the chauffeur, got out.

It was the end of May, two in the afternoon and the tree-bowered village of Compton Fleury was sleeping under a cloudless sky. One might almost have been tempted to ask: "Is it dead?" There were bees about, but no people, and if Oliver Goldsmith had come out of one of those thatched cottages flute in hand he would have been in the picture, much more, anyhow, than the limousine and Charlie Simmins.

The latter came to the open inn door, looked down the stone passage that gave view of a back garden and knocked on the door post.

Then he came in down the passage and almost into the arms of Prout, the landlord, who was coming out of the stone-flagged tap room. Whilst Prout drew the beer from a barrel standing on little legs behind the counter, Charlie lit a gasper.

"Compton Lydeard," said Prout, as he put the full mug before his guest, "you'll find the gates a mile down the road to the left. Be you the chap that's come down to fetch young Master?"

"Now how the blazes did you know that?" asked Simmins.

"Tuppence is the beer," said Prout.

Then pouching the coin he lit a pipe and sat down and the two became friendly, and Charlie absorbed the intelligence that the butlers of the great house always became the landlords of the Spence Arms and the other servants tenants of the village, and that Patrick Spence (whom he called Pat for short) was "a one and no mistake," and ever since the death of old Squire last year had been going wilder than ever, running in the woods with Scunner Duffield. School! Why old Squire had sent him to a 'perparatry' school and he'd run away twice and near set fire to the place.

He rose to draw himself a drop of beer and in the momentary silence the voice of a cuckoo from the far woods came through the open bar window and from the near woods the voice of a dove:

"Don't cry so, Susie!—don't cry so, Susie!—Don't cry so, Susie!—*Don't!*" said the dove.

"Well, if he sets fire to Buckley Square I hope he'll burn up that dam' old stick," said Charlie, referring to his master, Lord Trevessa, whom he had already described for Prout's edification.

"Oh there ain't no *harm* in him," said Prout, "not what you might call harm. It's along of his bein' an only child and mishandled as you might say with only Mrs. Pounce, she's the housekeeper, to say him nay and a tomfool parson as a tutor. Parson's gone for a holiday, so that's why he's being taken up to town for a day or two. I heard it all from Mrs. Pounce. Parsons never did any good with boys, not what I've seen. Look at their own sons—runagates, most of them, and here's Pat, sixteen and over, and what's Parson Adams med of him? He ain't a proper parson," said Mr. Prout pushing his mug a bit away. "More a tutor-parson than a holy order one and his nose is either stuck in the air or stuck in a book—no more use than a blind horse; simple as Molly the milkmaid, and easy to come over as Mick the looney—Parson!"

Thus Mr. Prout, attempting to describe a profound mathematician with the heart of a little child.

"Well, I must be going," said Charlie, rising and looking at his gun-metal wrist-watch. "Left down the road, you say?"

"Can't mistake it," said Prout.

They came outside.

The car took its way along the road by the woods. Woods to the left, fields to the right from which, over the water meadows of the Evenlode, came the distant voice of a cow praising her God. It sounded like that; even the toot of the motor horn lost some of its associations under this sky of an old-fashioned May, velvety with warmth above the cuckoo-haunted woods and the meads where the buttercups lay like scattered guineas.

CHAPTER II

COMPTON LYDEARD is shy. From the hills whose mild blue outline marks the western sky, you can see the woods of Compton where King Henry hunted the boar and something of the park threaded by the Evenlode ; but of the great old grey and rose-coloured house nothing but the twisted chimneys.

Starting off to hunt the place down on foot the woods would swallow you and the paths mislead you ; even the gates on the road leading from the thatched village of Compton Fleury are inconspicuous and say nothing of the fact that they have admitted kings in their time.

They were open.

So were the doors of the great house as the car drove up.

Not a soul.

From the carriage drive the turf ran to a ha-ha, beyond that to the river, with its little stone bridge, beyond that to the far-off woods, outliers of the New Forest. Solitary oaks marked the grass standing in the ponds of their own shadows, deer browsed on the wood edge, but of man there was no sign.

The house was to match.

Charlie Simmins sounded the horn.

Then the house, like the Palace of the Sleeping Beauty, began to wake up.

"There's the car!" came a distant voice, shrill and shouting the news. Doors banged, a young footman appeared from the inner hall carrying a shabby suit-case and a small bag, and after him a stout plum-coloured lady with asthma. An asthma that had to work for its living, lifting and lowering the great cameo brooch upon her ample front.

This was Mrs. Pounce, the economic priestess of Compton, the guardian of sacred receipts, keeper of the still room, exhibitor of the mansion to occasional and favoured tourists, knowing it as she did in all its intricacies from the minstrels' gallery to the last priest's hole and secret chamber.

She was carrying a basket of asparagus, carefully tied over with blue paper.

The asparagus of Compton, like its nectarines and black Hamburgs, cannot be matched, and as she handed it to Charlie to be stowed in the car as a present for his lordship, her instructions were cut short by a voice from the doorway.

"Oh, good Lord! Will you look at the 'bus they've sent!"

"Now what's the matter with the car?" demanded Mrs. Pounce, turning on the owner of the voice, a pleasant-looking red-headed boy in a painfully new suit—dressed for Town evidently, and with a bowler on his head that didn't fit and was evidently resented.

"What are you airing now, what's the matter with his lordship's car, what's——"

"It's shut," said Pat, inspecting the vehicle. "One of those beastly shut things you can't open. You the shover?" he asked turning to Charlie, who was standing by the door, of the car the stiff image of Respectfulness.

"Yes, sir."

"Then I'll sit with you and drive."

"Oh no, you don't," said Charlie, suddenly bringing his passenger down to his years and himself on to the *loco parentis* platform beside Mrs. Pounce, but with a grin that greased the refusal, "Not with the engine runnin', anyhow." He winked at Mrs. Pounce and was frozen. She did not know of the intelligence he had absorbed from the lips of Prout.

"We'll see," said Pat.

He got in.

A man had suddenly materialised on the drive, a long lean man in leather gaiters with a tanned face, recalling the

more noble of the birds of prey, and jet black hair visible under his old cap.

This was Scunner Duffield, a small holder whose little farm had nothing to do with the Small Holdings Act, stolen as it had been or " enclosed " by a Duffield (Yorkshire of course) centuries ago.

A man with money in the bank, well-to-do in a small way, yet a known poacher.

The old squire had never minded. Scunner never took more than a just proportion of the pheasants, kept the place clean of louts from Mamsbury, the county town, and could doctor a horse, a cow, or a dog better than any vet. He was also a great boxer, a keen judge of form in a horse and a haunter of the local race meetings to his own advantage.

He had come to see Pat off, and the latter sighting his friend popped his head out of the car window as it started.

" Don't forget that ferret, Scunner," cried Pat.

Scunner nodded.

He watched the car bearing away his pupil, then with a nod to Mrs. Pounce he turned and took his way homeward. He had taught Pat a lot, but Charlie Simmins was destined to teach him more—or was it Pat who was to teach Charlie?

CHAPTER III

CHARLIE at the wheel had for a moment forgotten his passenger, but he was not to forget him long; the straw-hatted village was past and they were turning into the main London road when the stink of a gasper made him half turn his head.

Smoking in the car!

Now Lord Trevessa's attitude towards tobacco in any shape or form was well known, indeed his letters to the *Times* on the subject of cigarette-smoking in restaurants and public places had caused a good deal of amusement among the bright young people of that day; but what the General Public did not know and what Charlie Simmins did, was the fact that his Lordship had a nose for this matter as keen as his dislike.

Charlie flung this information across his shoulder in his own language and the cigarette smoker threw the filthy thing out of the window, an act that not only cemented friendship but also earned him a place at the wheel along fifteen miles of the London road where it runs forty foot wide and arrow-straight between Creswell and Whitley.

"Easy to steer, ain't she?" said Charlie, as he re-took the wheel.

"Easy as butter," said Pat. He busied himself examining the gadgets on the board before him.

The old squire had never got into a car. There was no garage at Compton. An old Ford kept by Willis the coachman for running messages to the market town lived furtively in a shed with the fire engine, a narrow, semi-secret life, that however broadened after the squire's death.

Pat found that it could go across country, do everything

in fact but leap ditches; agile on its legs, able to take flood-water like a duck, unsmashable and kindly to handle when ditched, it still wanted gadgets.

Here in this benighted 'bus that would have died of asthma over country that came quite naturally to the skinny and sprightly old Ford, there was a clock, a speedometer, a mileometer, things that told whether the oil was doing its work, others that dealt with the electricity, etc.

These contraptions that were always indicating things to the mind of Charlie were now collectively exhibiting to him the fact that Pat had a mind like a ferret—or a mongoose.

Having explained the gadgets he found himself called upon to explain other things.

Pat up to this had only passed through London going to and coming from the "perparatory" school where he had come so near to the accomplishment of arson. He had never been to his guardian's town house and he wanted to know all about it. Was it near Victoria Station; how many servants were there?

"Me?" said Charlie. "Oh Lord no, I don't live in. I've a room of my own, Dale Street, Maida Vale. Mrs. Summers——"

"Mrs. Who?"

"Landlady, by name Mrs. Summers—Garage is Gunner Street—close to Buckley Square—get there nine a.m. Telephone laid on from Buckley Square—get instructions for day, sometimes it's 'Car not wanted till three p.m.'"

"What do you do with yourself then?"

"I goes to the Y.M.C.A. and sings 'ymns."

"Bunk!"

"Fact! I'm a member. No, I don't go there, reely, but I've got to belong. All male servants lower'n Pybus, the butler, has to be Young Men Christians an' all females Girls Friendlies—by order of Shutters."

"Who's Shutters?"

Charlie checked for a moment.

"You won't tell, will you?"

"No. Heave ahead."

"It's just a name they've got for his lordship."

"Old Trevessa?"

"Yes—it's because of his eyes."

Pat recalled the figure of Lord Trevessa seen that day of the funeral. A tall old man with a dome-shaped head and heavy eyelids, eyelids just like half-lowered shop shutters—eyelids that would be slowly lifted to permit the cold blue gaze of his lordship to fall on lesser humanity.

"He *has* rum eyes, hasn't he?" said Pat. "I've only seen him once, but he's always writing instructions and things—he's my guardian, y'know. Wonder what sort of time I'll have with him."

"Well, I'll tell you," said Charlie.

"Last night, when he gave me my orders to take the car and fetch you, he said, 'Simmins,' said he, 'this young gent that's coming to stay with me for a couple of days,' says he, 'will want takin' about to the British Museum and such places'—No, that's not what he said, 'and so forth and so on' was what he said, 'and I'll look to you to take him, using the Buick'—that's our second car—'and see he don't get into no mischief. You know London,' he says, 'and George'—that's the garage chauffeur—'can drive me,' says he."

"Well, that's decent of the old boy," said Pat, with all the enthusiasm of his nature and of youth.

"Oh, he ain't bad," said Charlie, "but I'm thinking it's less you than the want to get shut of you, seein' he's so retirin' in his ways. Most of the day he spends at the Carlton Club, which he can't take no one into but himself."

"How's that?"

"Well, it's only for members, is the Carlton. No one else is let in, not the king of the Cannibal Islands if he came with all his wives couldn't get into that Club if he wasn't a member. I tell you it's Us."

"I don't want to go into the blessed place," said Pat, "he can keep it—but I'll have some fun, anyhow."

"How much money have you got?" asked Charlie.

"Two pounds."

Charlie reserved his opinion on the question of fun. Indeed he wanted all his mind for his business. They had struck the abomination of trams.

Trams and the little houses that form the outer lining of London town—mean streets, little shops, drab-looking people.

A cloud passed over the mind of Pat. He was blessed or cursed with a quick reaction to environment.

When a man is born he may come into the world naked, nevertheless he brings a lot of luggage with him, a Bag of Fortunatus packed for him by his ancestors and possibly containing anything from the mind of a Mozart to a bottle-nose.

The Kilgobins of Ballynahinch had put a red wig, sporting instincts and psychic powers into Pat's bag; the Wentworths—Celia Wentworth whose pastels delighted the early Victorians, was his grandmother's sister—artistic instincts; the Mahons who had intermarried with the Spences, had contributed a sealed packet marked "utter disregard of consequences." There may have been other gifts from other people but heaven knows these were enough to make for his happiness or the reverse.

His grandmother's sister's gift was not making for his happiness now.

Unable to alter the view or turn the car he turned his gaze inwards on Scunner Duffield and Scunner's little farm whose name spelt rats, traps, ferrets, hero worship and the hot cakes that Mrs. Scunner alone had the receipt for.

"Here's Buckley Square," said Charlie at last as they turned out of Hay Street.

CHAPTER IV

ON either side of the hall door were two conical metal caps, extinguishers for the torches of link-boys, and the door was opened instantaneously on the knock by a pale young footman who looked as though he never smiled, never had smiled, and never would smile.

The small outer hall where this individual lived with his hand on the door handle of the front door, so to speak, opened on the big hall floored with black and white tiles, like that of 10 Downing Street, tiles that have been trodden like those of Downing Street by the feet of many a Cabinet Minister.

Here Pitt had dropped his cloak and handed his hat to an attendant before passing on and up those stairs leading with a sweep to the great drawing-room on the first floor; here the days of Victoria had left their mark in the form of antlers and masks of deer, whilst a full length picture of the fourth Lord Trevessa, in a stock and holding a roll of paper, faced a full length portrait of the third Lord Trevessa, dressed as an admiral of his day. Each on either side of the grand staircase.

Pat disliked the place on sight.

That was the worst of Pat, or maybe the best—who knows. Things, places and people he didn't like hit him at once when he met them and curiously hard, as though they had been waiting all their lives to put punch into the blow.

It was, maybe, the Kilgobin strain in him with its psychic attachments. However that may be, this great aristocratic formal town house of the Trevessas hit him in a way that had nothing to do with its size or formality. The place had a tinge of gloom about it.

Maybe it was the ghosts of dead politicians, the wraiths of vanished fogs and fashions—the effect remained and Chiles, his lordship's man, appearing now to take charge of the guest's meagre luggage, did not lighten it.

Chiles took the ratty old suit-case and the bag and Pat followed him upstairs and upstairs and along a corridor to a bedroom looking on the Square, a smallish room where Chiles, having placed the luggage on a trunk rest, did something to the window blinds.

He did not ask for Pat's keys. The suit-case was not locked and disclosed the fact by gaping on the way upstairs so that a sock and a handkerchief had to be retrieved. He only said that dinner was at half-past seven, asked if he would unpack and receiving an answer in the negative, vanished, closing the door without sound.

Pat looked out of the window at the Square that was filling with dusk. Sunset with all its pomps and colours was in process no doubt or preparing down at Compton, but there was no hint of the business here. He opened the window and heard the noise of Piccadilly, then he shut it and took his seat on the bed.

It was a curiously plain, almost a shabby room considering the house to which it belonged.

The early and mid-Victorians did not run to splendour in their bedrooms—barring guest chambers—and this apartment, designed and appointed for male visitors of the younger son type, showed neither easy chair nor couch. Over the mantel "The Lifeguardsman Red" glazed and framed in bird's eye maple fronted "The Lifeguardsman Blue" on the opposite wall; a wardrobe faced the window and in an alcove half hidden by a green curtain stood a flat tin bath on its rim, relict of the days when gentlemen in whiskers used to tub in their rooms before shaving with razors that were a direct incentive to suicide and with the aid of shaving pots.

The obvious and only thing to be done with this room was to get out of it as quickly as possible, so having un-

packed in a hurry and got into the dinner jacket and stiff shirt that he loathed, he left the place, running into the arms of a maid-servant in the corridor who was in the act of bringing him hot water.

He hadn't washed !

Ungiven to superfluous washing and beyond the motherly eye of Mrs. Pounce he had " forgotten his hands " and the maid would know. But there was no going back—anyhow he had done his hair and in the lights that were on now in the great reception room corridor his hands didn't look so bad—all the same it was a jar, he was beginning to do things wrong and he had dressed too early.

The roar of the dressing gong told him that as he came down the last stairs into the hall to find himself confronted with his lordship who was coming out of the library, which opened from the left.

" Ah, there we are," said the old gentleman, giving a fish-cold hand, " had a pleasant journey I hope. All well at Compton—Chiles made you comfortable—yes, good—books—you'll find books and picture papers in the library—to amuse yourself; dinner's at half-past seven." He looked at his watch having nothing else to say and passed on.

Yes, in the library there were books all prisoned in glass cases, and on the table the *Field*, the *Sphere*, the *Illustrated London News*, the *Graphic*, to say nothing of the morning papers neatly folded, and the evening papers.

There were also great easy chairs, but Pat could find no chair that was easy—there was no mirror and he had horrible doubts about his face.

It had looked all right, he believed, when he was brushing his hair, but he had dressed so hurriedly and impulsively and with thoughts so astray that Memory could not quite confirm what Hope suggested to Belief. His hands were not so bad, anyhow, and he was just beginning to take interest in the Great Wall of China depicted in the *Sphere* when the roar of the second gong announced dinner.

Lord Trevessa had no knowledge at all of youth; he had

never been young and you can imagine the terrible boredom he must have experienced seated at the great dining table with, for sole guest, a boy of sixteen fresh from the country. But such an imagination would be entirely wrong. His lordship enjoyed himself immensely.

The something that made Club members flee from his approach and the House of Lords seek the smoke room when he was on his legs found itself free at last and he talked. Talked from the fish to the savoury.

"You are too young as yet to take an active part in the politics of our country, but you will have read in the papers of this Mr. Lloyd George—a man of remarkable activity—activity of tongue—yes, remarkable activity of tongue—we have yet to see," etc.

Or it might be the rose show of the Primrose League apropos of the question, "How are the roses promising at Compton?"

Whatever the subject might be it was the same in effect. The servants had nicknamed him "shutters," the House of Lords, above personalities, had labelled him "Rostrum," the Carlton "The Pump." But it was the middle title that hit the bull's eye.

Pat, too young to be bored, eased in mind as to the condition of his face and hands and vaguely flattered at being talked to as though he were a grown-up, rather enjoyed the business.

He had only to say "Yes, sir" and "No, sir" and try to look intelligent. Yet away in the back of his mind, nascent, nebulous—the merest wraith of thought, there was a sense of antagonism; not so much of antagonism against "Shutters" as antagonism of the latter towards himself.

Possibly it was the chill of the glacial soul of his lordship that affected him, possibly it was a premonition that very soon this man was to be in arms against him and the most passionate desire of his young life. How came it, who knows, but it was there.

After dinner he followed the other to the library. His lordship usually spent the evening at the Club when the House was not sitting. He had stayed at home to-night, not so much on account of his guest as of a little research he was making into the right of the De Breux's to bear a mullet or some such nonsense, on their quarterings, for the strangest thing about his lordship was the fact that though wealthy, powerful and descended from a long and noble line, you might have searched Bayswater for a finer specimen of a snob and failed in your search. He had his good points, and indeed snobbery is such a universal disease that even dogs are affected by it, yet still, considering the height on which he stood one might have fancied his lordship free from the most objectionable symptoms of the disorder.

"Now here is a book that may no doubt interest you," said the host, unfastening a book-case and bringing out a volume of Bewick's Birds. Then taking an easy chair and turning to a number of volumes on heraldry piled on a little table close by, he relapsed into research, and Pat, taking another easy chair, into Bewick.

Pat liked birds, but he did not care for them in books; however, he managed to engage himself with the pictures till ten o'clock when the snorts of his lordship proclaimed the end of his researches. The De Breuxs had no right to their mullet. It was wrong, wrong, absolutely wrong, it was a scandal in heraldry, it would have to be exposed, delicately, in a suggestive little article on some notes on the histories of the De Breuxs, De Mortimers, Montforts and Coygns, especially with reference to the fifteenth century. He promised himself also a fine time distributing the fact by word of mouth—he was, in fact, quite cheerful.

"To-morrow," said he, as he bade good-night to his guest, "you will be able to see something of London. I have ordered Simmins, the man who drove you to-day, to bring the car round for you after breakfast and take you to the British Museum, unless you would prefer the Zoological Gardens. I would like you to prepare a little plan for each

day you are here so that time may not hang heavy on your hands or be wasted. London is a vast library, as Lord Montmore said the other night, and in itself a liberal education from which I hope you will profit.—Ah—er—good-night."

CHAPTER V

LORD TREVESSA, like the late Emperor of Austria, was an early riser and an early worker.

One often wonders what these early birds do with the rest of the day, especially in cases like that of Lord Trevessa, of whom it may be said there was no earthly reason why he should rise at all. Why can they not rest in bed like decent folk till God turns on the light and warmth with which He has miraculously supplied the world, and having breakfasted like decent folk, turn to their allotted span of work—or, shall we say, as in the case of his lordship, wakeful energy ?

At all events this idiosyncrasy of his host's was beneficial to Pat, for he had breakfast alone—and sausages.

Heir to a big estate and many thousands a year, he had still to content himself down at Compton with whatever Mrs. Pounce chose to give him in the way of food. Boiled eggs and plainness up to this had been the order of the day at breakfast, in fact it was only recently he had experienced the soul's awakening to sausages, that never-to-be-forgotten first experience that had been rarely repeated.

Yet here they were and to be had every morning if he wanted them, to judge by the splendour of the breakfast menu that had been handed to him to choose from.

It was a bright beginning for the day and equally bright was the idea that came to him when Pybus, the butler, like an archbishop wearing side whiskers, appeared before him asking at what time he would like the car sent round.

"The garage is quite close, isn't it ? " asked Pat,

"Quite close, sir, in Gunner Street," replied Pybus.

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"Then don't bother to send," said the other, "I'll go round and pick it up at the garage."

"Yes, sir," replied Pybus. "If you prefer to go, you will find the garage close to the entrance and Simmins will be there no doubt by this, but it is no trouble to telephone."

"I'd sooner go. I'd like the walk, if my uncle——"

"His lordship is engaged with his secretary, sir, but he has left orders that the car is to be at your disposal."

"Thanks," said Pat.

Ten minutes later he was outside in the bright morning, feeling like a bird free of its cage. The Square was cheerful, at least as cheerful as it was possible for it to be under the weight of its years and high respectability, the pavement felt strange under his unaccustomed feet and the whole atmosphere strange and intriguing, so instead of turning to the left as directed by the footman that let him out, he turned to the right. There was lots of time and he wanted to poke round and see things. The mongoose instinct led him into Piccadilly and even down St. James Street where Grant's, the gunshop's window, held him for a delightful five minutes. Then he remembered the car and retraced his steps.

Now these seemingly trivial wanderings were not trivial in reality. Fate was leading him and timing his movements, delaying him with all sorts of little baits and snares. Had he found the garage five minutes earlier he would have been away in the waiting car and the whole current of his future life altered.

Gunner Street is in reality a lane, broad enough for a four in hand to pass through.

Tamplin's Mews was its name in the old days when it provided stabling and shelter for the horses and coaches and carriages of the nobility and for a race of men extinct as the dodo or the link-boy.

To-day it is all garages. Jackman's on the left was easy to find and here Pat found Charlie Simmins waiting for him.

Charlie was reading something from a piece of paper just handed to him by a girl.

The girl wore a hat with an old dejected-looking feather in it, she might have been fifteen years of age, she was poorly but neatly dressed and pale of face.

She looked at Pat as he came up. She had the most lovely eyes in the whole world, dark blue eyes with black lashes.

CHAPTER VI

"GO back and tell Mr. Skrines I'll call and see him to-day if possible," said Charlie to the girl, thrusting the piece of paper into his pocket as he spoke. Then he saw Pat, saluted and darted off to the car house where the Buick was in waiting.

The girl, in the act of turning to go, glanced back at Pat.

Then she left the yard and presently the Buick purred out of its shed and Pat got in.

"Was it the British Museum, sir?" asked Charlie.

"The which?" asked Pat.

"The British Museum, his lordship said you would like to be took to first."

"Yes," said Pat, "it doesn't matter. Who was that girl?"

Charlie, after the preliminary "sir" ceased "sir-ing" Pat.

"Oh a nursery governess at Mr. Skrines's come on a special message—from Skrines's. He's a man to do with horses, lives up at Peter Street, Queen's Road, Bayswater, just sent me a line over the Doncaster meeting to-morrow." Then, the car in the broad safety of Park Lane, "Do you ever have a bit on a horse?"

Pat under the guidance of Scunner Duffield had lost half a crown and won seven and six at the last Mamsbury point to point.

"Well," said Charlie, "this is no point to point, it's the Doncaster meeting and I've heard from Skrines Gladiator has more than a chance and it's twenty-five to one, the betting—twenty-five quid for a sovereign."

"Are you going to put anything on?" asked Pat.

"You bet," said Charlie.

They were in Oxford Street now heading east. Past Oxford Circus Pat, who had been ruminating, spoke:

"I'd like to have ten shillings on."

"Go the whole hog and make it a sovereign," said the other, "there's no use in mucking about in the betting game, hit when you're hittin' or leave it alone."

"Well, I don't mind," said Pat.

"I'll put it on for you when I see Skrines," said Charlie, "and I'll put the same on for myself—it's the only way to pull out in the racing business, backing favourites is a mug's game, get an outsider with legs to it and a man like Skrines to give you the tip and you've a chance of big money. I'll run the car round by Queen's Road, Bayswater, on the way home and make it right with Skrines."

"Why not go now?" asked Pat, a new idea jumping into his head.

"Well," said Charlie, "we're close on to the Museum now and you may as well nip in and have a look. 'Shutters'—I mean his lordship—will be maybe asking you about it and you'll be able to tell him if you've seen it. There's skelintons and all sorts of rum things and I'd like a while off to overhaul the radiator—so I'll run the car into Bentincks Garage and be ready for you in an hour."

At the Garage, Charlie produced the radiator from his pocket, it was made of green cardboard and contained half a dozen "gaspers," and Pat leaving him to the overhaul sought the Museum. Pat for all his wildness down at Compton had proved himself a pretty tame rabbit in London—up to this. He hadn't set fire to "Buckley Square" or revolted in any way, simply because Buckley Square was not a preparatory school run by a nagging yet characterless old lady, and as yet there was nothing to revolt against, also though Shutters, *alias* the Rostrum, *alias* the Pump might be a bore and an object of mild derision to his equals, he was a somewhat awesome personality to his nephew—at least as yet.

The Museum was a bore, but it had to be mugged up, so that questions might be answered if his lordship put them.

Pat turning into the gallery on the left looked at the Roman Emperors and the Roman Emperors looked at Pat with about an equal interest and understanding. But the Elgin Marbles were different.

Here there were men and women of stone, some draped, some *au naturel*, and the women—the good-looking ones all had beautiful eyes, heart-stirring, though up to this very day the eyes of womanhood had been as interesting to him æsthetically as gooseberries. For examination purposes he inquired of an attendant what all these things might be and found that they were the Elgin marbles.

Then he stood and contemplated the most beautiful of the lot and an art enthusiast might have fancied him held by the genius of Praxiteles—and maybe rightly, in a way, for the genius of Praxiteles was related to the genius of Life who had appeared that morning miraculously in Gunner Street.

From the Elgins to the refreshment room is a short cry and from here, having abated the stock by an old Roman bun and a bottle of ginger beer, the searcher after knowledge departed to be swallowed by the Egyptians and returned upon the shores of the Cannibal Islands.

He found the canoes and paddles and spears so fascinating that when he turned up at the parking place he had overshot his time by half an hour.

Not that Charlie minded. There was another chauffeur in waiting to keep him company and they had evidently been talking cars, the afterglow of their conversation evidently still resting on his mind.

"Don't you never let a car go to a repairing shop to be took down," said Charlie, "nor to have the steerin' gear looked to nor the blessed valves sharpened. Let a repairing man as much as look at a car and she's done. Do? Why get a shuffer that knows his work like myself, or put her

on the scrap heap or sell her to some mug. Have you got that quid handy ? "

Pat produced the money which the other pouched.

" Skrines will put it on for you," said he, " with Botters and they're good as the Bank of England—he won't charge nothing for the tip seeing it's me, only a shillin' in the pound out of the profits. This isn't his game reely, it's street bettin' he makes his money at, ten pound a week he makes regular at that job—but it's risky."

" How's that ? "

" The police would be on him, it's against the law, that's how." He explained the intricacies of street betting, it seemed a mean sort of business and Pat, despite the hypnotism of Charlie, almost regretted having embarked on the betting business, but they were bowling down the Bayswater Road now and it was too late to cry off.

Bayswater, like Bloomsbury, has seen better days, but the best days of Peter Street, Queen's Road could never have been very bright. Its houses are dingy, narrow, three-storeyed and with basements guarded by iron railings gone to decay. Hawkers haunt the street and a hawker's barrow was just pulling away from No. 10 when the car drove up.

" I won't be a minit," said Charlie, hopping out and running up the steps to the door which was open and at which a man was standing with a cauliflower, evidently just bought from the hawker, in his hand. A foxy, unpleasant-looking man who was evidently Skrines, for he and Charlie went into the house together leaving the door still open and guarded only by the waiting car.

Pat contemplated the house. He was thinking of the girl. She had been in and out of his thoughts since Gunner Street. Now she was actively alive in his mind driving everything else out. She must live here—she who had looked back at him. A furious, imperative desire to see her, to speak to her leapt up in him, a desire he had never felt before and which belonged to a new world which had

come to him in vague premonitions but never in reality like this—

And all the time she was looking at him. The sound of the car had brought her to a top window—and now she was running down the stairs duster in hand and now, as if appearing casually to look out, she was at the lower front window. Charlie and Skrines had evidently gone down to the kitchen to conduct their negotiations, else she would not have been there.

Pat caught sight of her at the window. They looked at one another, she did not smile or make any show of recognition, and yet—

He opened the car door and jumped out, leaving the door swinging, ran up the tread-worn steps and pushing aside the half-open hall door came into the passage that went by the name of hall.

She was there, come out of the sitting-room to meet him, only half seen, for he had pushed the hall door almost to with his heel. He caught her by the arm, almost roughly, drawing her towards him.

"What is it y'want?" she whispered.

That whisper, it told everything; told that she had been thinking of him, that she was his, that she knew what he wanted or so he fancied. He got it next minute. Seizing her round the body he crushed her to him and he hadn't to hunt for her lips. They found his and clung and clung.

He could feel the ribs of her corsets under the print dress, she was pushing him away now almost fiercely, she who had been clinging to him and drinking his very life a moment before. Then they stopped struggling and she replied to his whispers:

"No, I can't—I can't go out now. To-morrow—where? —The Gardens—I'll meet y' there. I'll be there at twelve —Which Gardens? Kensington—By the Round Pond."

Steps sounded coming up the kitchen stairs and voices. They flew apart, she went into the sitting-room, he towards the door.

When Skrines appeared in the hall followed by Charlie, Pat was standing on the steps as though he had just left the car, tired of waiting.

He got in and as they drove off he glanced back at the house. It stood in all its sordid hideousness showing nothing of what it might contain, its dusty windows staring at the street above the half-gone-to-ruin railings.

Charlie seemed a bit under a cloud. He was anxious.

"I've got the money on," said he, "but I've been thinking if his Lordship twigged what we've been after, it's me that would be getting the kick out."

Pat thought so, too, but he said nothing.

"Without a character," said Charlie.

It is curious how men sometimes leave the reckoning of the cost till the ball is over and the fiddlers departing.

"So you'll keep a shut mouth, won't you?" went on Charlie who was steering now towards Willesden, though it was the lunch hour.

"Think I'm a fool?" said Pat.

He fell silent as Charlie. He wasn't quite happy. No, he wasn't quite happy over this business into which he had tumbled. Twelve to-morrow, Round Pond, Kensington Gardens. He had fallen into the affair, yet he did not want to get out, he was in a new world that had nothing to do with the world of bricks and mortar, a world into which he had fallen and a world which he knew was wrong—but he did not want to get out of it. He had no delusions. This was no blinding Romantic passion. She was a girl to make Uncle Trevessa hold up his hands in horror and he had kissed her and she had kissed him and his whole being was on fire and he was to meet her to-morrow that was all, and—*what* would they say if they knew!

"They" included Mrs. Pounce, no less than Lord Trevessa—everyone. Even Charlie.

Instinct told him that even Charlie would go and tell if he knew. Instinct told him that the whole thing was

wrong—but it was no less enthralling for that. More so, in fact.

But he was not happy.

Neither was Charlie.

Well Charlie knew that if even a whisper of this betting business got out he would be fired at once by his lordship.

Yet he had acted from very simple motives.

The instinct of the tipster is enclosed in most men's make-up. It is pleasant to put a man on to a good thing if the act does not damage oneself. Besides it was pleasant to say to Skrines, "There's a young gent in the car outside wants a sovereign on Gladiator." That was all, yet, innocent though it all might be, the possibility remained of very unpleasant consequences.

"You'll be wanting some luncheon," said Charlie, in the midst of the wilds of Shepherd's Bush, whither he had driven devious and without fixed purpose. "I'd run you out a bit into the country parts only there's no use your going to one of them greasy little 'otels with a greasy waiter wantin' a tip for stuff you can't eat an' a bill for four an' six on top of it all. Better pull up at this 'am and beef shop and get some sangwidges."

He pulled up at a ham and beef shop and Pat bought the sandwiches, hefty three-cornered affairs, eight of them, and two bottles of stone ginger beer, also a glass thrown in for sixpence.

"Sort of picnic," said Charlie as they started, "without any women to muck things up. Last time I stopped at that shop was with Skrines and his missus on a bank 'oliday. You won't tell anyone, never, I took you to Skrines, will you, it's between you an' me, ain't it, as between man and man——"

"Of course I won't, think I'm a fool?" said Pat. "Where were you going with him on the Bank Holiday?"

"Out for a run with him and his missus in his old car. She got at him over the sangwidges because they were beef not 'am, an' she give that chap hell'n'tommy for the rest of

the day. She's a howlin' terror an' leads him an' that girl the life of dawgs."

"Which girl?"

"The one as brought me the note from him down at the garage."

"Oh that——"

"Yes. Eileen."

"She's their nursery governess?"

"Yes—looks after the children. Can't have any 'ome to go to or she wouldn't stick that shop—she's not 'it, as you may say, so much as nagged. That was Skrines's words after we'd spent our happy day and he and I were having a pint to pull us together. 'I'd sooner be 'it than nagged at,' those were his words."

Pat had a queer feeling as though the root of his tongue were sinking and had to be kept up (Irish fashion) by trying to swallow it.

This thing had struck his new-formed passion a queer blow. "No 'ome to go to, led a dawg's life by Mrs. Skrines."

It was like a douche of cold water.

As I have hinted, the passion that had sand-bagged him in the garage and robbed him of all thought of consequences in Peter Street was not the passion for Justice and had nothing to do with Pity. Couldn't have, for it was the self-same passion that had made cave men chase cave girls. Primitive, as you may say, and none the less so for being new to him.

And now the object of it was disclosed to him as an object for pity.

He had read "Jane Eyre"; he had a heart hot to resent injustice either towards himself or anyone else, and the misery of the house in Peter Street came up now as a silent witness backing Charlie's words.

Yes, it was a douche—for the moment—but not strong enough to extinguish the fire of that kiss.

He sat without talking.

These suburbs of London through which they were

passing were just the things to pull him down more and depress him, and the country when they came to it held a trace of them. It was not real country; villages of new-built houses with slated roofs, fields that seemed surprised to find themselves still fields—" and we'll pull up here," said Charlie, halting at a cross-road beyond a village and with a fine view of a huge gasworks and a vague smell from a far brick field. " Nice quiet place."

They divided the sandwiches.

" Crawling with sharabangs in the holidays," said Charlie, " lots o' life—the country ain't bad if you don't put too far out. This would be the place for me if I was retirin', get your evening newspaper and twenty minutes to town by the nearest train, shops and everything handy."

" I think it's beastly," said Pat.

" Well, it's according to tastes," replied the other. " I reckon you're used to trees down at your place; I'm used to houses—it's all what a man's used to. Put me among a lot o' mucking trees and you might as well sink me in the Serpentine."

" What's that ? "

" Piece of water in Hyde Park near Kensington Gardens."

" Where's Kensington Gardens—I mean which is the best way of getting there from our place ? "

" What you want getting there for ? " asked Charlie, uncorking the ginger beer, but with no depth of interest in the question.

" I've heard of it."

" Well, it's a mucky 'ole, all nursemaids and children—off the Bayswater Road, why I drove you past the railings of it, there's a pond there where old chaps sail boats on."

" What sort of old chaps ? "

" Old lunatics," said Charlie, opening a new packet of gaspers whilst Pat felt in his pocket and produced his own.

" Ever been sick from smoking ? " asked Charlie, as they lit up.

"Sick as a dog," said Pat, "it was a cigar, bagged it out of the Pater's box—and I smoked it in the stable."

They smoked there by the side of the road; Pat seated on the running board, his bowler hat on the back of his head, making a cock-shy of the ginger beer bottle, and Charlie fiddling with the engine, smoked and exchanged confidences.

Charlie had seen much of the town. He was only twenty-three but he had been six months in the Earl of Duntartan's employ as a start-off. It was the black blot on his scutcheon. The young earl was spending his last £250,000 and his business hours were between seven in the evening and five in the morning.

"Near ruined my 'ealth," said the recounter of high life, "managed to get a job after that with the old Duke of Sudbury, he passed me on to his lordship. His lordship would never have touched me, not straight from Duntartan's. I tell you Duntartan's shop was the sort of a place makes you *want* to join the Y.M.C.A. without bein' shoved.

"Drunk at five in the mornin', sick at nine, sleepin' till four, champagne for afternoon tea, girls, horses and gambling—such a carry on! Don't you never have anything to do with girls, it was them that did him, worse than the horses. Why he had them on his shirt links done in 'namel, same on his cigarette case, wonder to me is he hadn't them tattooed all over him and now he's in Australia—that's what the family say. He ain't in no Australia, he's in Bedlam 'sylum with straws in his hair. Perkins the butler told me. Met Perkins a year ago, he was sellin' collar studs in Fleet Street with his toes through his boots. He'd robbed his next master having picked up the trick at Duntartan's and got jugged and there he was, sellin' collar studs and all because a blinkin' under-housemaid had led him astray, which she wouldn't only for what he'd learned at Duntartan's."

He got into the car and Pat following him, they started, pushing further out into the country and returning to the Square at five o'clock, having stopped at a greengrocer's

to buy a few sprigs of parsley. Parsley is reputed as an antidote to the smell of tobacco.

Lord Trevessa did not dine at home that night. He was dining at the Club.

He had an interview with Pat before starting, inquiring how he had enjoyed himself, but asking few questions.

"To-morrow you might go to the Tower," said his lordship. "I would like you to see everything worth seeing before going back. You will find Harrison Ainsworth's book on the Tower in the library. Stay—I'll find it for you—" and the old gentleman, though the car was waiting for him, turned on his heel to the library and throwing back his silk-lined cloak, fetched down with his own august hands the book from its place on the shelf to the right. "Full of history," said his lordship, "admirably written—it will amuse you this evening and give you an extra interest in the place to-morrow."

"I was thinking of going to-morrow to see Kensington Gardens, sir," said Pat.

"Well, you can go there first. Simmins will drive you. Kensington Gardens—um—" he turned and fetched another book from a shelf. "Here is something about the gardens too—and, oh by the way, how are you off—forgot to ask." He took out a pocket-book and handed over a piece of crisp paper. "Just something between us both."

Then he was gone.

Pat looked at the thing. It was a tip. A fiver.

He put it in his pocket, put the books on the table and sat down in one of the armchairs nursing his knee.

Shutters, by his kindly act, had put him all at fault.

Well he knew that the betting business would have been anathema to his guardian. Trevessa had treated him like a gentleman, had given him the best, put his car at his service, thought of his comfort, and this last act which expressed thought as well as generosity was the coping stone.

And he had treated Trevessa, how ?

The betting business, the other business—even the smoking came in as a minor deceit with its crown of parsley.

He had tried to read "The Tower of London" long ago in the library at Compton and had turned it down as junk—he hadn't told that.

But anyhow he had told that he was going to Kensington Gardens!

Such a miserable and shuffling thing is Mind when it gets to finding excuses that actually he took a sort of comfort to his pride from that, not taking into—or rather refusing consideration of the wild upheaval of eyebrows, the exclamations of horror and wrath, the outcries for pursuit that would have followed if Shutters by any manner of means were to discover the why of this journey to Kensington Gardens.

Then the second gong roared and dinner consumed his thoughts, Pybus officiating at the altar.

Coffee was served in the library.

He had not looked closely at the Kensington Gardens book, taking it up now he found its name was "Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens," and looking at the first few pages concluded that it was a book for children and disdained to read further, but he looked at the pictures.

CHAPTER VII

HE awoke in the morning afflicted with a sense of depression, a thing as rare with him as a headache or a cold.

Yes, it was almost the same feeling as that which he had experienced on the morning before being sent to the preparatory school, almost the same as that which had come to him on the morning when his dear foolish old father had to be buried. The father who had condoned his running away from Mrs. Wackens and had decided that Home was better for the boy than Harrow.

Skrines stood by his bedside and Charlie, and his mind was still half troubled by fragments of dreams in which Lord Trevessa was pursuing him through a land of hobgoblins and Peter Pans, where gnats played fiddles in trees, *à la* Rackham.

Kensington Gardens.

Twelve o'clock.

And he could cut it out if he wanted to. Nothing easier. The whole world was with him. The Tower was waiting for him—and Traitor's Gate. She would go to meet him and he wouldn't be there.

At the breakfast table he wasn't going, everything seemed demonstrating that fact to him, the marmalade jar, the man who was serving him with coffee, the view of the Square from the window.

"At what hour would you like the car, sir?" asked the footman.

"The car," said Pat. "Oh, tell them I'll call at the garage if I want it—I'll walk round."

"Very good, sir."

How he was to get there without walking unless he hired a taxi to do the few hundred yards, it was difficult to see.

Half an hour later, just on ten o'clock, as he was crossing the hall to go out he heard his lordship's voice through the partly open library door.

"Gar, gar, gar," no words, just the voice, slow and rather nasal. His lordship was talking to his private secretary evidently, talking possibly on some matter of State that would be debated in the House, possibly, or the condition of the weather. Pat did not investigate, he continued his journey hurriedly as though afraid of being held and detained, received his hat and stick from the door janitor and departed into the fine morning.

If it had rained that morning Pat's story might never have been written, or at least the interesting part of it. But it was not raining. The sky above "Buckley Square" might have inspired Verlaine's verse:

Le ciel est, par-dessus le toit,
Si bleu, si calme! . . .

So blue, so calm, so warm. Nowhere in all the world is there a sky like the London sky of new born summer, seen *par-dessus le toit.* It is, of course—or maybe—the contrast with the grey old city, who knows—the magic remains. Windows were open in the Square to let in the warm and living breeze and a hawker with a barrow laden with flowers had just debouched from Hill Street, a postman was dallying by the area railings of No. 8 in converse with a plump and pretty housemaid.

In Piccadilly a hansom cab was turning into St. James's Street looking amidst the taxis like a thing revived by the hot weather and by some happy chance a barrel organ left over from the beginning of the century had planted itself at the pavement by Hatchards and like some strange bird from the past, had broken into song.

This is the weather that to the seeing eye brings Major Pendennis out of Bays to walk again the pavement he loved

and fills St. James's Street with buff waistcoats and gardenias.

Pat could see nothing of these, yet in some curious way and in the comparatively few hours since his arrival in town, he had sensed the fact that the pleasantest oasis in the wilderness of London is measured by the length of St. James's Street, the length of Piccadilly, the length of Pall Mall and the depth of "Buckley Square", and their dependencies included Bond Street.

It was in Bond Street that he made inquiries of a policeman as to how long it would take him to reach Kensington Gardens if he took a taxi-cab, and it was near eleven when the cab deposited him at the gate giving entrance to the Broad Walk.

There was no old lady selling balloons at the gate, but there were plenty of "Figs." In fact nursemaids and their charges abounded.

Half-way down the immensely broad walk he took a seat, by a miracle tenantless, and looked at his watch; it was five minutes past eleven.

CHAPTER VIII

THE bother about Kensington Gardens, at least this part of them, is the fact that the spirit of the Bayswater Road follows you in and the voice of the Bayswater Road follows the leading of the spirit.

The growl of traffic does not mix well with the whisper of trees.

Pat was a forester. Scunner Duffield had rubbed his nose into this business and besides he had the instinct for trees. This cannot be acquired. He had also, or would have on coming of age, six thousand acres of land including a big stretch of old forest, a spur of which ran into what they call the New Forest, and maybe it was this consideration that had induced his father to let the boy grow up under the tuition of Pragnell the chief woodsman, Scunner, Mackett, Pragnell's helper, and old Woodchurch the mole catcher.

The old squire had loved his trees. You can't love land in the same way, nor any other form of property; flocks and herds, even horses, are a passing show, but the trees remain, the only living things that stand through History.

There was at Compton the remains of an oak that figured in Domesday Book and the youngest elm was fifty years of age and had still seventy to run, according to the life allotment of the elm which is six score years. The Roundheads had camped in these woods, hunting for Sir Hugh Spence, and their camp had been by the great nut grove where children came by permission in autumn, as they did in the days of King John.

No wonder the old Squire loved his trees and fostered the feeling for them in his son.

It was the trees perhaps that made Pat dislike Kensington Gardens. They seemed prisoners, there was a grubby look about them despite their new green, they were out of place—then the railings and the roar of London and the nursemaids and the children, dirty-looking people lying on the grass, a woman in a bath chair.

The Round Pond, when he reached it, did not improve matters.

There were no old gentlemen sailing boats, only children and some of them half ragged. He sat down on one of the seats facing the pond, there were two nursemaids on the seat talking together, but there was room for him and they continued their idle conversation as though he were non-existent.

He looked at his watch, it was twenty minutes to twelve.

Would she come ? How would she come ? How would she be dressed ? Had she forgotten ?

The minutes slipped away and the nursemaids departed.

Twelve. Not a sign of her.

Five minutes past twelve—nothing.

No, she would not come.

The strangest feeling of relief mixed with baffled longing filled his mind—then, suddenly and miraculously his lady love appeared. Coming along the path round the pond dressed as yesterday and with the same dejected feather in her hat, unrecognised till close, because of her employ—Heavens ! she was wheeling a perambulator !

He had never thought why, in her position, she had been able to give, off-hand, an assignation for a meeting at such a distance from her home, as though she had been a person of leisure untrammelled by Duty.

He rose and came towards her twirling his cane.

CHAPTER IX

EILEEN had been having a terrible time with Horatio Skrines, now worn out and asleep under the hood of the perambulator; and nearly as bad a time with Horatio's mother since six o'clock, almost enough to drive Pat out of her head.

She never believed for a moment he would be at the Round Pond to meet her, yet she had hoped by some possibility he might.

"So you *have* come," said Pat.

Eileen nodded, resting, with her hands on the handle of the perambulator, and then, pushing back a stray lock of hair that had escaped, somehow, from under her hat:

"I always come here in the mornin' with the baby," said she. "Were you waiting for me?"

"Yes."

He turned and they walked along together. A nursemaid on a seat looked at them with a not altogether approving air. Pat knew. He was all eyes. Like those neurotic patients mentioned by Lombroso he seemed to have developed the power of sight in all sorts of places, even his back, and it seemed to him that the whole of London was watching him—and not with favour.

They were, in fact, a noticeable pair, she in the old hat, pushing the shabby perambulator, he in the get-up and with all the seeming of a "young gentleman."

Heralds walking in front blowing trumpets might have been an extra advertisement, but would not have added to the socialistic piquancy of the show.

Poor Eileen felt nothing of all this. She knew of course that he was something vastly above her, albeit levelled up

with her in some curious way because of his age—sort of Prince and Pauper business with the Pauper and Prince both freemasons—but this knowledge did not abash her in the least.

The beauty of her training at Skrines lay in the fact that it had turned her from a silly creature, hyper-sensitive to the sunshine and shadows of life, into a creature automatic, confused and dulled in its relationship with the world. The heart was there for the power of love and joy to touch, but the mind from long acceptance of the inevitable had lost elasticity and vision.

But even Skrines could not prevent her mind from turning to Pat yesterday morning, could not prevent something in her leaping up to feed at his lips like a bird.

When her being had come in contact with this new creature who had brushed her life, it became strangely and newly alive, but to the rest of the world it was dull as leather.

Nursemaids did not bother her or what they thought.

"Let's go along this path," said he, "and on to the grass. You come here every morning?"

"Unless it's raining. Horry has to be wheeled out—Where are you going now?"

"Let's go under those trees—and what do you do if it's raining?"

"Oh, there's always something to do," said Eileen, "if it's not helping in the kitchen it's upstairs dusting, or the dogs to be looked after."

"What dogs?"

"Mr. Skrines's, he keeps dogs."

"What sort of dogs?"

"Terriers."

They brought the pram to a halt and they sat down on the grass.

Eileen tucked her legs under her and drew her skirt tight over her knees and plucked a daisy. Pat on his elbow and with his hat beside him looked at Eileen.

He noticed how thin her hands were, and she wasn't pretty—yet she wasn't ugly. He could not see the beautiful eyes that were downcast looking at the daisy, yet there was something in the pale and almost peeky little face that suddenly reached out to him.

Something helpless and innocent, almost feeble.

Something that made him sit up and clasp his knees and brood for a moment.

"Look here," said he, Charlie's indictment of the Skrines rushing into his mind, "Don't you ever get out except with that baby?"

"Only to go messages for Mr. Skrines," said Eileen, "an' run to the shops. I took a note to Mr. Simmins yesterday—that's when I seen you."

"Yes, and that's when I saw you. Did you know I was coming to the house?"

"No—I heard the car and looked out."

"Where? I didn't see you till Charlie had gone in."

"I saw you from the top window," said Eileen. "Then I came down."

"Did you want to speak to me?"

"Yes," said Eileen, her voice lowered a bit.

She had put the daisy in her lap and was picking others, she seemed entirely engaged in this hunt for daisies, a slow selective search that seemed to engage her attention almost to the exclusion of everything else.

He drew closer to her and put his hand on hers. Then he took the hand.

"Don't," said Eileen. "You mustn't—there's someone comin'."

An old gentleman was coming along the path near by, and Pat dropped the hand and moved away a bit.

He was sitting nearly opposite to her now, and kept his place, for other people were passing along the path.

He was all astray in his mind and seemed to be getting nowhere, tongue-tied like her, only she seemed now less at a

loss for speech than intent on the daisies of which she was making a tiny bunch—there were only six.

She glanced up at him, her lovely eyes resting on his before glancing down to put the last daisy in its place ; then she pulled a thread from somewhere in her skirt and tied it round the stalks and leaning forward on her knees put the flowers in his buttonhole patting them down with her hand.

CHAPTER X

THE simple little act had an extraordinary effect upon the boy.

Barring that kiss yesterday, sudden and electrical, their feelings each for each had been masked and contained behind the walls of circumstance and place, and behind these walls his feelings for her had been a mixed and struggling crowd.

He had never had anything to do with the other sex in a business way before now. Mrs. Pounce in choosing a house, parlour, scullery or stillroom maid had never given marks for beauty. With the County girls of his own class he had had little to do—ferrets had interested him much more.

It was just at the psychological or physiological moment when ferrets were turning into ferrets for him, and girls into girls that Eileen had said to him without speaking, without knowing that she spoke, with that backward glance as she was leaving the garage yard : " I'm a girl."

Charlie had told of her wretched life at Skrines's letting loose a host of other feelings in him of a softer nature ; then she had turned up wheeling that perambulator and he had been condemned to walk with her, the whole world watching him walking with a nurse girl; now her pathetic little face as she sat picking the daisies drove away snobbery and shame, now the half-whispered words as he released her hand. " Don't— you mustn't—there's someone comin' " had somehow and in an extraordinary way inflamed him. More even than the kiss of last night.

Yes, his feelings were a mixed and struggling crowd, till now, suddenly kneeling and leaning forward she put the little bunch of daisies in his buttonhole and pressed them down with her hand.

It was as though she had taken possession of him, said, "You are mine," almost as though she had said, "I love you."

She had been picking them for him, tied them together for him.

Like coals put on a fire the act blanketed his other feelings for a moment.

It was an advance on her part, a check in the pursuit. It was also almost an assumption of equality. In some strange way it seemed to speak of the future and his position and Lord Trevessa.

But coals do not as a rule put a fire out.

"Oh, dear me!"

Eileen, as though someone had suddenly struck her, half rose to her feet.

Horatio J. Skrines in the perambulator had awakened and was giving tongue, a leg appeared from beneath the lowered cover and in another moment the thing might have been over.

She found the missing comforter and plugged it in the Horatian mouth, then she stood rocking the pram gently backwards and forwards.

"I must be going," said Eileen, "got to be back before ha' past one."

"Bother!—See here, couldn't you come out this evening?"

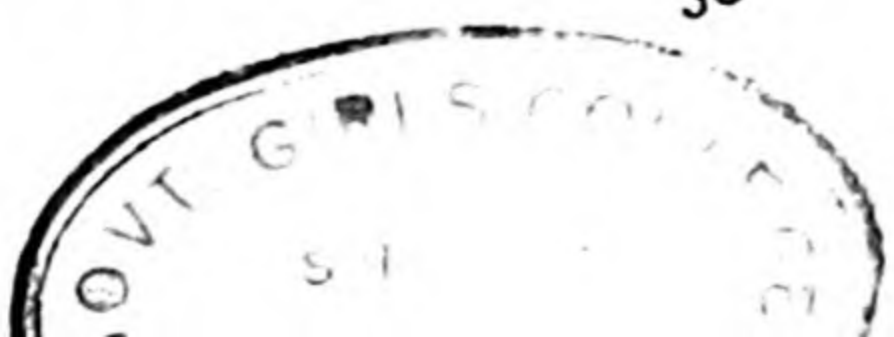
No, she couldn't come out that evening, there was always something to do in the evenings, she could come to the Round Pond to-morrow, same time.

"Unless it's raining," said Eileen, "or unless she wants me for something else."

Pat cut at the grass with his stick.

"Come on," he said, "I'll walk to the gate with you."

The fact that the gardens were almost clear now of invalids, nursemaids, children and all high-class idlers drawn homeward by the midday meal did not materially add to this determination.



He was irritated by the opposition of circumstance, and in the condition of mind to brave the whole world. He knew that even if she could meet him that evening, it was highly improbable that he could meet her. How could he get away from "Buckley Square" and on what pretext? Things were against him, and when things were against Pat he was generally against things.

He looked about him.

There was not a soul anywhere near them, the vast spaces of grass lay sunlit and empty only for a few ragamuffin children at play, children who had no luncheons to call them home, or who had their nose bags with them.

Not a soul to see.

She lifted her face to his and they kissed. Then they got the perambulator on to the path and started.

"I'll be here to-morrow at the same time," said Pat, as they turned their backs on the Round Pond, walking in the direction of the Broad Walk.

It had suddenly come home to him that however it might be on the morrow, the day after to-morrow was the day on which he was going back to Compton. Tuesday to Friday was the limit of the visit and the day after to-morrow was Friday.

He said nothing of this, however.

At the back of his mind was the fact that her name was Eileen, what other names she might have he did not know, nor did he care.

It was the same with her.

As far as this business was concerned they had no relationship with ordinary life—no more than two of the Kensington Garden sparrows had.

It was just a coming together without speculation, or thought of the morrow, or of consequences or anything else.

Nature had introduced them one to the other—she doesn't bother about names—Mr. Red Head, Miss Violet Eyes—that was all she said.

But Nature, though careless over the formulæ of introductions, is a most fussy hostess.

She won't let her guests alone once they are introduced but keeps bothering them to know more of one another.

"I'll see you across the road," said Pat when they were outside the garden gates.

He did. Had he left her to the business it would have been all right, but unlike her he was new to the London traffic problem, tried to hold her back at a critical moment with the result that Horatio Skrines was as nearly as possible collected to the Hereafter by a 'bus.

"Those 'buses!" said Eileen with her hand on her heart, her cheeks had flushed with the fight—and heavens! she was beautiful, a new thing altogether.

They hung for a moment in parting.

"To-morrow," said Pat.

"Yes, to-morrow," she said.

She started, he standing and looking at her as she went, she looked back once, then went on.

Engaged by the omnibus incident and the parting from his companion he had not noticed a tall lady who had passed just as he was saying "to-morrow" to Eileen.

The lady was standing now on the kerb as though waiting to hail an omnibus or a cab and as he came towards her she seemed to see him for the first time.

"Why Pat," said the lady, "what are you doing in London?"

It was his cousin Miss Portman.

She had been a visitor at Compton before the death of the old Squire, she had attended the funeral.

Pat had never cared for her. She was a quite estimable woman, but she had been staying at Compton when he ran away from Mrs. Wackens, and she had offered to take him back. It was, maybe, this offer that helped the old Squire in his decision to keep Pat at home. He considered that Miss Portman was given to interfering. "One of those religious, interfering women, let her mind her own

business." She was also what he called an "anti"—that is to say she disapproved of fox hunting and all "blood sports."

That was true enough, but on top of that she was "nosy". She had spotted old Carter carting off wood that didn't belong to him, and Louisa Mary Anne Thomas, an under housemaid, taking a swig of port wine out of a decanter in the dining room, and Billy the boot boy being sick with the unconsumed half of a Corona Corona beside him as mute witness of theft.

All of which facts she had laid like dead rats before the unappreciative master of Compton. "Nosy!"

"I'm staying with Uncle Trevessa," said Pat.

"Long?" asked she.

"No—going back day after to-morrow."

"Well, I'm glad you have fine weather. Pity I did not know or you might have come and had luncheon. What are you doing to-morrow?"

"I'm going to the Tower."

"Come and have luncheon first."

"I can't," said Pat, "I've got to go to—go to the British Museum."

"Well, remember me the next time you come up. How is everyone at Compton?"

"Very well thanks."

They parted, Pat pursuing his way rather disturbed in mind.

Had she seen him with Eileen?

He felt somehow that she had. Her eyes had been watching him all the time they were talking.

Well, it didn't matter whether she had or not. Even if she had she would have seen nothing much, just him talking to a girl.

He reached the Marble Arch.

He was hungry and reckoning that food might be got in Oxford Street he went on.

At Nusbaums he went in.

"Two doughnuts, two raspberry turnovers, slice of Swiss roll, two ices and a bottle of ginger beer—three and tuppence," said the girl, the cash register rang and he came out.

He remembered the Tower. That confounded Tower—. Suppose Shutters were to question him at dinner—he couldn't mug it up, even if he could he disliked telling lies. He had been acting lies enough since he came to town but that was different somehow—he had told a lie to Miss Portman, but that too was different, there was something about Miss Portman that invited mendacity and almost condoned it. There are people like that, but Shutters was quite another matter, he'd acted like a gentleman. No, he'd just have to tell the truth, say he'd been to the Gardens and was too tired to go to the Tower.

He took his way along, looking at the shop windows, turning down Regent Street and so home.

It was after three when he arrived at the house, whose door flew open for him almost on the sound of the knocker.

CHAPTER XI

TREVESSA House had its times and seasons. On the night of a great dinner it was not the same place as on the afternoon of a luncheon party. During a political upheaval its atmosphere was charged. During those feverish days when the Carlton saw the last-ditchers sharpening their flint arrow-heads and five hundred Radicals naked of shame standing waiting to be turned into noblemen, Trevessa House had an atmosphere that was tragic. Ghosts of the great departed seemed meeting in the corridors and watching from the stairs. This was most likely an effect of imagination as it was much more probable that they would be hanging about the corridors of the House or even waiting in that dismal black and white floored hall of No. 10 Downing Street. However that may be, it was a fact that this great house, one of the hundred hubs of that eccentric system Modern English History, had its moods.

The three o'clock in the afternoon of a fine summer's day mood was upon it now. Nothing could be more daunting. All business was suspended. Drawing towards the end of the season and with its owner a widower there would be few callers, even these would be told to-day that he was out.

Pat stopped to look at the great clock that was ticking by the library door.

Tick—tock. Tick—tock as though the seconds were coins being let slip one by one into the hand of the past.

"Whewell—Coggershall" was the inscription on the brass face and the date 1763.

It was a clock of character, a Whewell. When it struck it made a noise beforehand as though clearing its throat,

seemed to make a gesture as though freeing the arm that struck the gong.

The boy stood looking at the leaping second hand and listening. He was sometimes like that, caught away from things, his eager volcanic nature blanketed, half shut off, his mind in a pleasant day-dream.

Rooks could do it cawing in the distance, even the far-off voices of servants of an afternoon disputing or talking in the kitchen at Compton had done it, just as the ticking of the Whewell was doing it now.

Most people know this form of auto-hypnotism by sound, like that of Braid, produced by staring at a bright spot. Only with Pat it carried him further than it carries most people. It seemed to be telling him things.

In the library the morning papers were laid out on the table neatly folded, the chairs were all in order and there was not a book out of place.

He took a chair and produced the packet of cigarettes and the box of matches which he had brought with him from Compton. Then he remembered that he must not smoke.

As a matter of fact smoking even at Compton was carried on under difficulties.

It pained Mr. Adams.

Mr. Adams was an object of justifiable derision. He was a sixth wrangler, he lived with his head in the moon (Eddington had not yet made his momentous pronouncement on the density of the matter in some of the stars but Joshua Adams had already put his finger on the pulse of the question). He was named Joshua, he was quite blind without his glasses; on seeing a ferret he had said, "What is that horrible thing?" Guns frightened him and he wore carpet slippers—an absolute mug, yet he had more hold on Pat than anyone else by reason of his kind sweet nature, and as smoking by his pupil pained him, Pat, not to pain him, only smoked in outhouses and places or in the woods.

There were no outhouses or woods here, but there was

the bedroom, and he could open the window. He left the library and came upstairs.

On the grand floor where the great reception rooms were situated, he paused. The mongoose in him demanded exploration. He poked his head into a vast room with a painted ceiling and polished floor, a ballroom evidently.

A huge chandelier hung from the painted ceiling, it was in a brown holland bag. In the old days it had been lit by gas, electricity had supplanted gas, but, out of action, it still lived in a bag as in the Victorian era. The room was panelled with priceless tapestry, hunting and love scenes.

Pat's mother had been Trevessa's half-sister; a gay and delightful girl, she had no doubt often danced here in the days of the "Blue Danube" and "Dream Faces." She had left no trace.

He put his head into other rooms, all out of commission, scrupulously kept and negatively repellent.

Trevessa House is a large place, much larger than you would imagine from the outside view. The houses on this side of the Square, in fact, run back some of them, as far as Hutten Street. These that don't run back so far have gardens of sorts.

Trevessa House is all house, and it has many corridors.

One of them showed a tiny short staircase leading up to a door. Pat went up the little stairs, opened the door and poked his head into a boudoir upholstered in purple where a lady sat writing at a little bureau.

No!—There was no lady at all there! It was only an impression lasting a fifth of a second.

The bureau was there but there was no lady and no chair before it.

He was quite undisturbed. He knew it was only "one of those things."

The "things" in question were very interesting items possessed by, or intrusive upon, his make-up. Old Kil-

gobin lendings or powers of sight or powers of imagination —who knows ?

One day when he was only six or seven he had pushed open a door at Compton, " Sir Stephen's Room ", and had come on a big party of gentlemen racketing and drinking and playing cards.

Puff ! Gone in a moment, and he had not said anything about it to anyone. It wasn't real, and besides——

One day in the long ride he had seen a tall man drawing a bow till the feather of the arrow nearly touched his ear.

Gone like a gun flash, no man, arrow or bow, nothing but the trees.

No fear, as though the impression had been received by a part of his mind that was dull and unspeculative, or cut off from his ordinary working mind.

There were other things, trifles—but he never, never talked of them. Never bothered about them, in fact ; they weren't real, and besides—was it that he was ashamed of a weakness or was it that his volcanic energetic and practical everyday mind refused as far as possible intercourse with a mind that was not in evidence every day. A mind that the ticking of a clock or the far-off cawing of rooks could awaken or at least bring from behind a curtain—a mind whose food was reverie and whose relationships were all with the immaterial, a soft mind that took recognition of the goodness of Adams and had flinched in the dark at the cry of a shot hare. A mind that possibly had psychic and " seeing " properties. A mind, in short, for a hardy rabbit trapper, dog fancier and law breaker to be ashamed of—at least to ignore as much as possible.

But the boudoir was just the place for a smoke.

He lit up. Then he began to poke round looking at the pictures and things.

Pastels in oval frames of women who did not interest him, a crayon of a gentleman in a tall hat with a gun, another of a little girl in pantalettes wearing a broad-brimmed hat and holding a hoop.

It was his mother as a child. He did not know it.

Indeed this had been her room, though many of the things were long before her time, as for instance the books on the little table by the door. "Books of Beauty" and "Keepsakes," true curiosities of literature.

Then he opened the bureau and pulled out the drawers that still held stationery material, gilt-edged note-paper of a past day, a bottle of gold sand, sealing wax, a little seal with a dove on it, trifles, yet not without charm and once important enough no doubt to their girl owner.

As he was engaged like this his attention became suddenly attracted by a sound.

The soft and swift pad pad of feet ascending the little staircase outside.

Hurry, precaution, secrecy, all seemed conveyed by that step light as the footstep of a panther moving towards its prey.

The boy turning from the bureau and in the couple of seconds of time during which the sounds lasted, felt scared.

It took a lot to scare Pat, the old car had done it once when it took the bit in its teeth, flung its brakes to the wind and charged down Buckhurst Hill with all the exuberance of youth.

But this was a different sort of scare, psychical, seemingly vocative of evil, full of the premonition of danger.

The footstep told all that in some mysterious way. Then the door pushed gently open and a face peeped in.

It was Chiles, his lordship's confidential man.

Chiles, who had received Pat that day of his arrival and carried his suit-case upstairs was Trevessa's valet, but he was much more than that. Both here and at Mortmane, his lordship's country place in Bucks, he was the Grey Cardinal, the Grand Vizier, the something behind the throne, sometimes the man with the bow-string.

The servants feared and loathed him, his eyes were everywhere and even the lordly Pybus, custodian of the plate

and controller of the cellar, found it convenient and politic to keep in with Mr. Chiles.

And the prefix was not undeserved. Mr. Chiles might lather his lordship's chin and see that his linen was aired, but these humble duties were only the basis of his true vocation, which was to keep his lordship informed on all matters interesting to his lordship whether domestic or social or even sometimes political, for the biggest information bureau in the world, though fortunately unorganised, is that conducted by upper servants of the type of Chiles.

This perfect spy, coming along the blue corridor, scented tobacco, stopped, sniffed, followed the scent and saw the boudoir door a bit open. Came up the little stairs and looked in.

"Oh, I *beg* your pardon, sir," said Chiles and vanished.

"Silly ass," grumbled Pat, annoyed at the fright he had got and not too pleased at being caught smoking, even by a servant. "Damn silly ass."

He pushed the drawers of the bureau back, then putting his hand in his pocket for another cigarette he found something.

It was the bunch of daisies that he had taken from his lapel and put in his pocket. He had clean forgotten them.

He looked at them, the wretched wilted little things tied round by the thread from her skirt. He had forgotten her for the moment too, yet here she was speaking to him and now in the voice of pity.

Maybe it had been growing in that half-known mind of his, maybe it had been suddenly full born at the sight of her miserable little gift—the result was the same. Hatred!

Hatred of Skrines, his wife, Peter Street. Pity for Eileen. The wretched daisies had done their destined work with this gallant pursuer of dames and if Lord Trevessa had known the whole affair he might have rested content—had he understood.

But his lordship never could have understood.

Pat, taking a seat on the arm of a couch, twiddled the

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daisies between finger and thumb. He had thrown the cigarette stub into a jar.

He was looking at the little pale face of the girl seen in profile and with that helpless look about the mouth.

Get her away from there—how ? where ? It seemed as though he were looking down at something lying helpless in the bottom of a pit—as though he were the only person in the world that knew of it.

Actually and for a moment the wild idea came to him of telling Trevessa.

But, despite the knight-errant fit that had suddenly seized him, he had some common sense left.

Trevessa was as bad as Skrines, or could be if aroused—the whole world was the same, even Charlie.

He knew nothing of what we call social problems, yet he knew that Eileen had the whole world against her—and what was to help her ?

Nothing, but the fact, before mentioned, the fact that when things were against Pat, Pat was generally against things. He put the compassion-inspiring daisies back in his pocket—without, however, removing from them the thread pulled from her skirt. Then he left the boudoir.

CHAPTER XII

AT breakfast next morning there was no inquiry as to whether he wanted the car.

One may fancy an animal in the jungle taking notice of a silence—the absence of some accustomed sound may be indicative of the presence of an enemy as a footfall or the snap of a twig and this absence of the expected inquiry disturbed Pat.

Last night his lordship had dined at the Club. Returning home at nine o'clock, he had not appeared in the library till ten ; when he did come in to fetch a book from one of the cases he seemed—or was it fancy—cold.

Stood humming whilst he chose the book and only spoke six words before beating his retreat.

"Had a pleasant day, I hope ?"

Now what did that mean ?

He had not appeared to say good-night.

All this might mean nothing or it might mean a lot.

Pat finished his breakfast and left the room. Still no inquiry as to the car.

When he left the house half an hour later it was the same.

The weather still held fine and he turned in the direction of Piccadilly and before he had gone two hundred yards he knew that he was followed.

Turning from the west to the south side of the square, he saw the pursuer coming along the west side. It was Chiles.

Chiles in mufti, that is to say in his ordinary out-of-doors get-up; but still Chiles.

The momentary glimpse was enough, there was no mistaking that dead pale face and those little side whiskers.

Yet, and after the first shock of certainty, came the thought, "Maybe I'm mistaken, maybe he's out on a message or on some business of his own."

In Piccadilly, far too cute to turn round, Pat paused at Lincoln Bennett's window. The hats did not interest him, but the reflections of the passers-by on the plate glass did, and out of the side of his eye he could observe a lot.

Nothing.

He turned and stood on the kerb looking up and down the street as though for a cab. Nothing—Chiles had vanished, at least there was no trace of him to be seen and presumably he was not on the war-path.

But Pat was a hunter. Moles, stoats, weasels, rats and the wily and sagacious hare had all taught him their lessons.

He boarded a red 'bus that had slowed down owing to the traffic, handed the man twopence and received a ticket.

He did not know where he was going and in the Brompton Road out he got.

Looking into Harrods window he became aware of the presence of Chiles away in the distance mixed with the pavement crowd, glimpsed and lost. How had he got there, by a following 'bus or by cab, aeroplane, or the road of the Mahatmas?

Pat did not think or care. Blazing rage had seized him only to be smothered and kept under.

He knew now. That beast Miss Portman must have written or 'phoned to Shutters—it couldn't be anything else.

Chiles had been sent to spy on him; what a caddish trick!

Why couldn't Shutters have spoken to him, treated him as a gentleman?

No use in asking, the thing now was to meet this business with the same weapons.

If Lord Trevessa had been hunting around for a suitable stick and searching for a really dangerous spot on Pat's character to hit, he could not have done better than he had done—or shall we say worse. Pat was a gentleman. He had been guilty of various small deceptions since coming to town but he had regretted them, he had been pushed along, he hadn't "set out to deceive," and it is possible that the Eileen business if left alone would have fizzled out harmlessly. Back in Compton distance would have intervened to say nothing of trout fishing. But Shutters, urged by the devil, perhaps, had entirely altered things. He had hit the gentleman in Pat and roused the desperado. Without a word he had said, "I know you are fooling with a girl, I am watching you, my hand is ready to reach out and catch you and her and knock your heads together —disgraceful!" and saying this he had turned the lady into a thing to be fought for not with fists but cunning.

Pat turned into Harrods well knowing that the hound in pursuit would follow him.

Eileen was out of the question to-day, she would turn up at the Round Pond and he would not be there, she would think he had dropped her—well, that would all have to be. The great question of the moment was to utterly hoodwink Shutters. That beastly Portman woman only knew that he had been talking to a girl, nobody knew the truth of the business, not even Charlie.

Were he to keep the appointment it was a hundred to one that Chiles, surely following, would pounce or at all events track Eileen to her home, with disastrous results for Eileen.

He entered Harrods and wandering slowly through the departments bought a necktie, then coming out the bright idea came to him that if Chiles were following he would take him to the Tower. He found on questioning one of

the door-keepers that the Tower was best reached by underground.

He went there, he did not trouble to look about to see if he were followed, he hoped that he was and left it at that.

After the Tower he took a long walk. He hoped he was taking Chiles too.

Pat was good at walking.

He took himself and his possible companion to the Bank and from the Bank to Blackfriars Bridge and from there, by way of the Embankment, to the House of Commons and from the House of Commons to Victoria Station—Such a walk!

From there they wandered to St. George's Hospital, then to Bond Street. It was now five o'clock. He had not eaten since breakfast so he went into a confectioner's and had a good time. He hoped that Chiles was outside. Then home.

At dinner that night he told of all he had done and seen and Shutters for once in a while contented himself by listening whilst another did the talking.

Shutters, it seemed to Pat, had a puzzled look, but that may have been just fancy.

Next morning at ten the car was at the door to take him back to Compton.

His lordship took leave of him in quite a kindly manner, glad enough, no doubt, to get rid of him, but not showing it, and Pat getting into the car drove off. He had seen nothing of Chiles. He fancied, in fact hoped, that Chiles might be in bed recovering from his peregrinations.

"Nice bright day," said Charlie as they turned into Hill Street.

"Jolly," said Pat.

He looked so careless and happy that one might have fancied he had quite forgotten Eileen and the fact that she must be fancying he had dropped her for good.

But that idea would have been far from the truth. The bunch of daisies absolutely done and withered was still in his pocket, but in his head a plan.

They had cleared London when Charlie who seemed to have something on his mind suddenly relieved himself of it.

"I couldn't get to tell you yesterday," said Charlie, "but Gladiator pulled it off at Doncaster and I've got the money for you."

"How much?" asked Pat.

"Ten quid."

This was pleasant. But Pat had his business instincts.

"I thought you said the betting was twenty-five to one?"

"Oh Lord no!" said Charlie. "Ten to one was the starting price."

"You said twenty-five."

"Then I must have been barmy," said Charlie.

"All right," said Pat, "fork out the coin."

They slowed down and Charlie produced two five-pound notes; Pat pocketed them without offering any tip to the donor.

It was Charlie's manner that told him he had been done, and for the next ten miles he sat turning Charlie over in his mind and considering his character.

He was pleasant and didn't seem a bad sort, but—not one little fault of Charlie's from start to finish that didn't recur to Pat now. His disrespect for Shutters, his pretence of being a Christian young man, his cigarette smoking in secret, his obvious disposition to connive at petty deceits, his connection with Skrines, his act in making him—Pat—put a sovereign on a horse, and lastly the high suspicion that Charlie and Skrines between them had robbed fifteen pounds out of the winnings, or anyhow ten pounds—all these things turned up in the mind of Pat, and they all seemed miraculously helpful to the plan that was stewing in his mind.

A desperate and piratical plan that would have had no viability if Lord Trevessa had treated him like a gentleman and if Charlie had been an honest servant and not a slack twisted dodger to be used without compunction.

CHAPTER XIII

THE housekeeper at Trevessa House had prepared a luncheon basket for the travellers. Two packets of sandwiches, two apples, two hard-boiled eggs, a packet of salt, two bottles of ginger beer and two glasses.

Where the road for Compton Fleury breaks off from the Winchester road, Charlie drew the car up beside a bird-haunted coppice.

"Here's a good place," said he.

They got the luncheon basket out and set to.

They had nearly finished when Pat, silent and browsing, suddenly spoke:

"See here, Charlie."

"Yus."

"Do you remember that girl?"

"Which girl?"

"Which girl!—Skrines's—Eileen."

"Oh, her."

"Yes."

"What about her?"

"I'd like to scrag Skrines, him and his beastly wife—the way they treat her—she never gets out except with that beastly baby—she told me so and I want to get her away from there."

"Now what are you talking about?" said Charlie amazed at the words of the other. "Told you—why she's never spoke to you."

"Yes she has. When you were in with Skrines that day I spoke to her and I met her next day in Kensington Gardens."

"Oh, *that's* the piece," crowed Charlie suddenly explod-

ing with mirth over the glass he was raising to his lips.—"Well, you *are* a one!"

"Which piece?"

"The skirt—Lord love me"! He broke down again. "Well, you are a one—Skrines's Eileen—and me swearin' it was bunkum. I meant to have told you only thought it better to keep my head shut. Chiles comes to me and he says, 'Look here, Charlie, what's this about a skirt,' says he—'young Mr. Spence has been seen follerin' a skirt. Nipper with a p'rambulator by Kensington Gardens, him and she thick as treacle and him tellin' her he'd meet her to-morrow.' That was the night before last. He came all the way to my room in Dale Street to ask me—after ten it was, said the noos had come to his lordship; rare taking he was in.

"'Skirt,' said I, 'I don't know nothing about no skirts. Take me for a blinkin' haberdasher—I've drove him only once in town,' I says, 'and that was to the British Museum. Maybe he picked her up there.' 'Well,' he says, 'if he asks for the car to-morrow, you're to keep your eye on him, it's as much as your place is worth and if he doesn't ask for the car but goes out on his own, I'm going to take the business in hand. He won't get the better of me,' says he, and with that off he goes. Did he follow you?"

"He did," said Pat, "and I led the beast all over the place. I was going to have met her in Kensington Gardens, but I wasn't such a fool. I went to the Tower and all over the place. I'm as stiff as a tree to-day with the walking and I expect he's worse. He found out nothing."

Charlie chuckled. Pat ruminated.

So it was Miss Portman, after all. She must have 'phoned Shutters, curse her! Nosy beast. He lit a cigarette.

"I'd have given my eyes to have seen Chiles sweatin' after you," said Charlie, following suit. "It's well you twigged him or we'd have been all in the jug. Anyhow it's over and well done with."

"Oh no, it's not," said Pat. "I'm going to get her away from there. She's thinking now that I have dropped her and left her like a skunk, but she won't think that long."

"How d'you mean?" asked Charlie, chill alarm stealing upon him.

"I'm going to get her away from there and you've got to help."

"Me got to help you—get her away from Skrines? Not much."

"Don't be an ass. I've thought it all out, it's as simple as pie—"

"Not much," cut in Charlie hurriedly. No doubt he'd have crossed himself if he'd known how, he compromised by flinging away his half-smoked cigarette. Not knowing the semi-philanthropic facts of the case he recoiled from the idea that had been put before him and from Pat as though the latter had suddenly grown horns.

"Kim along," said Charlie, half rising.

"Sit down, you dam' fool," commanded Pat.

"I won't do nothin' of the sort," said Charlie, sitting down and beginning furiously to pack the glasses, waste paper, sandwich remains, eggshells (he'd been trained not to leave a litter behind a picnic and even in his upset of mind the training clung). "I won't do nothin' of the sort. Abductin' girls! Soon as I leave you at home I'm goin' straight back to tell Shutters."

"If you do," said Pat, "I'll tell him you called him Shutters, and if you split on Eileen I'll tell him how I met her—and I believe that beast of a Skrines has done me out of ten quid. I'll find out the starting price of Gladiator. You'd better keep your head shut. I tell you that."

Charlie felt as if he were in a box with the lid closed and Pat sitting on the top. Bitterly now did he repent not having lived up to the ideals of the Y.M.C.A. Shutters would shoot him out without a character if he knew of the betting business, that was certain, on the other hand, if he were pressed into the service of this red-headed young devil

who had started his infancy by setting fire to preparatory schools and who had now suddenly blossomed into an abductor of girls, he might land in the jug. He felt a sudden and honest and holy terror of Pat and an earnest desire to be free of his company.

"I ain't going to say nothing," said Charlie. "I was only talking for your good. I'm not the chap to split. Did I say a word to Chiles? Not I. I'll swear on me Bible oath to say nothing, but I'm not going to mix in the business."

"Then you can stay out," said Pat. "I'll do it myself."

It came home to Charlie with a dunch that he was dealing with that blessed thing, a gentleman.

Pat had him in a noose, but he used no threat to force his help, Pat would not tighten the noose unless Charlie split. And Charlie didn't want to split as long as he wasn't involved in the business. Greatly eased, he strapped the luncheon basket and lit another cigarette.

"I'd have given you a fiver to lend a hand, but I'll do it myself," said Pat. "You've got nothing to do but keep your head shut, that's about all you're good for."

"I'm no use for much but drivin' a car," acceded Charlie. "My nerves is fiddle strings, and if I run over a dog I'm jumpin' out of my skin for nights—let alone runnin' off with a girl. I wasn't born a gentleman like you and cut out for that sort of work. But I can keep my head shut—only for the love of Mike, go careful—abductin' girls is clear against the law, there was a piece about it in *Reynold's* only last Sunday——"

"Oh, shut your head. What are you gibbering about? Whach'you mean about abducting girls? What's the law got to do with it? I'm not abducting a girl—what do you mean by it?"

"Takin' a girl away from her home and paryents for unlawful purposes."

"Home and 'paryents'—you're a bumble-headed ass. Nice sort of home and 'paryents' she's got. I want to

collar her and get her away from Skrines and his beastly wife. Where's the harm in that ? "

" And where are you going to take her to ? "

" Compton."

" But what will the old woman say ? "

" Which old woman ? Mrs. Pounce—why you didn't think I was going to take her to the house ! "

" Then where are you going to take her ? "

" Scunner Duffield's—he's a farmer. Mrs. Duffield wants a girl to help. I heard her say so only a few days ago and it jumped into my head last night."

Charlie, relieved from personal responsibility could review the matter now with a certain philosophic calm and detachment.

" Well," said he, " there's some likes one thing and some another. For myself I don't know what you see in her. She ain't nothing to look at to my way of thinking."

" Come on," cried Pat, flinging away his cigarette-end and scrambling to his feet. " You'd keep jawing away all day—shove the basket on board—and let's get."

" Clean cracked ! " grumbled Charlie to himself, referring no doubt to the lunacy of love that will not brook criticism of the beloved. " Crazy as a coot, but if he hasn't got cold feet I reckon he'll get them."

He felt quite sure of that. Pat might talk but he'd get cold feet over the business as soon as he got home.

Charlie in his amours had often got cold feet. He could have remembered several instances of appointments not having been kept in the park or at the corner of Buckley Square. Monetary or other considerations had given him cold feet.

So would it be with Pat, and with this comfortable assurance in his mind, he pressed the button of the self-starter.

CHAPTER XIV

MR. ADAMS had not yet returned from his holiday at Cambridge, so next morning Pat had a free hand and nothing to do. Not that Adams would have mattered much if he had been at Compton; when the pupil wanted a holiday the tutor was no bar, at least he was a movable bar very easily taken from its socket.

Lord Trevessa, in the short term of his guardianship, had come to recognise that the absent-minded but patently honest mathematician was as good a tutor as possible under the circumstances—at least for the moment. Of course the boy ought to have been sent to a public school, but his father had decreed otherwise, also it was the will of the father that Pat should "choose his own profession."

Adams was instructed to sound his pupil on this matter and the pupil had plumped for Medicine—refusing the Army or the Church.

Pickwick and the doings of Bob Sawyer and Ben Allen was responsible for this choice and you can imagine the face of "Shutters" when it was made known to him.

A nephew a medical student! A man with ten thousand a year and a big estate a doctor! Nonsense, rubbish! He let the question of a profession drop.

"He is a good boy, honest and kindly by nature, but very self-willed," had written Adams. "I have sounded him again on the question of a profession but he refuses to consider any calling but that of medicine and indeed he is not very keen on that idea, which seems born of a passing phase of mind. Perhaps, indeed, if you will permit me to say so, it might be better to waive the idea of a profession for the moment at least. I am endeavouring to interest

his mind in those subjects that form the basis of culture, which for an English gentleman of wealth and high position, is, I think, a better possession than mere academic knowledge. Free of the study he has the woods and fields, and I can imagine no better preparation for a large estate owner than a youth spent in intimate association with the facts of the land and the workers, especially here where the workers are of the honest primitive English type, from the woodcutters to the yeoman farmers, such, for instance, as Mr. Duffield, a most estimable farmer of the near neighbourhood, who farms his own land and is, I believe, a compendium on all field sports and for whom Patrick has a great admiration and regard."

It was for Duffield that Patrick was hunting this morning.

Pressing as the business in hand was, he did not proceed in a bee line. The stables had to be visited first to see how the ferrets were getting on. It seemed to Pat that he had been twenty years in London. The ferrets, however, were just the same, none of them had grown grey from old age and he was turning from the disused loose box where their hutch was situated when he saw Cary the handyman and old Horniblow the woodcutter wheeling out the wood cart from its shed. It was laden with tree tackle, ropes as thick almost as ships' hawsers, thin ropes, steel hooks, saws. It was evidently a lopping job they were on, not a felling.

"Seen Master Duffield? No, I hain't seen Master Duffield," creaked Horniblow, for whom Pat was still a child beneath the dignity of "sir." "What are we doin'? We'm off to lop the big beech to right of the ride, powerful big limb she wants ridden of before next starm brings it down."

"Come on," cried Pat. "I'll help to pull."

Eileen, Duffield and the world for a moment forgotten, he tackled on to the shaft of the cart.

Along a path through a delightful and mysterious world of potting sheds, glass houses, tool houses and manure

heaps went the cart, and by old red-brick walls where the peaches and nectarines were taking the sun.

Away down a slope, with Cary acting as drag and Horniblow cursing behind, it charged and up a slope by the seven elms it went, past the pine clump and into the sun-dappled twilight of the woods. Squirrels shot up trees and a jay yelled at them and flew. Then sunlight showed right ahead and the broad green drive that was once the archery ground of Compton, the range where men practised with six foot bows when Cressy was still a battlefield of the future. Here stood the great beech that wanted lopping and here were the ladder-men and the ladders that would raise the tackle by which the limb would be swung before it was amputated, a business delicate and scientific as a surgical operation.

Near the ladder-men and looking up at the limb stood Daddy Ambrose. Daddy Ambrose was the licensed lunatic of Compton. In olden days he would have been the hermit. He was, in fact, a hermit. He lived away to the west in a tiny clearing of the trees. He was a product of the estate. The Ambroses had been woodmen in the time of King John, hard-working respectable folk no different from others till Daddy was born, seventy years ago, to disgrace the family.

He ran away from home, tramped the country, worked in Birmingham, learned to read, became a full-blown Socialist at a time when there were few Socialists in flower, left his job, tramped the country, communed with trees and flowers and birds, neither drank, smoked, swore nor ate meat, came back to Compton twenty years ago and fell in with the old Squire and told him Compton woods were God's not Spence's and that he, Daddy Ambrose, had as much right to them as he, Patrick Ferdinand Spence.

"Be damned to you," said the old Squire. Then he laughed.

Daddy pleased him, also he was as much part of the estate as any of the trees. So it came about that Daddy got permission to live in the woods and build himself a shack and to draw on the Compton gardens for potatoes and vegetables

since he didn't eat meat. "They're as much yours as mine," said the Squire.

Also the Squire ordered Mullins, the village tailor, to supply Mr. Ambrose with as much clothes as he wanted, which wasn't much, and twenty years passed and Compton had a hermit.

Year by year Daddy grew more sprite-like and lovable and more like a member of the vegetable than the animal tribe; he grew drier and his forked beard grew white, but otherwise he remained young. He kept to himself. Between him and the other people of the estate a great gulf was fixed. He wasn't wrong, but he wasn't right. He wasn't insane but he wasn't sane. People without avoiding kept away from him and his shack was never invaded. He read books, so it was said. Scunner Duffield alone was at all intimate with him, and Pat, and the trees were his family, his children, his brethren.

When a tree had to be felled he was always there, a mute mourner, and he was here to-day at this operation as a friend of the patient.

"Hello, Daddy," said Pat.

The other waggled his head. He was speechful enough when alone with the boy, but he wouldn't talk before Horniblow and Cary and the ladder-men. If the boy had paused to think for a moment he might have wondered how it was that the Hermit of Compton, living apart from the workers as he did, always knew when a tree was to be felled or doctored, but Pat was ungiven to speculation and at that moment he caught sight of something that made him forget tree, woodcutters and the little old man who was yet to play an important part in his life story.

The something was Scunner Duffield crossing the ride away down near the remains of the great Doomsday Oak.

CHAPTER XV

PAT started to run. Scunner glancing up the ride at the crowd round the tree had seen the boy. He waited.

"Hullo Scun," panted the other. "Just the chap I wanted to see."

"So you're back?" said Scunner.

"Looks like it," said Pat. "Where you going?"

"Away along home. Been over to Mamsbury about a horse and come through here as shortish cut—and what about Lund'n?"

They had fallen into a walk, taking a path on the opposite side of the ride that would lead them to the high road and Duffield's farm.

"Oh, London's all right. Say, I forgot something, what was Gladiator's starting price at the Doncaster meeting?"

"Thirty to one," replied Scunner. He didn't ask which meeting, as Gladiator had only run in one race that year. "Thirty to one, Hector second, Middleman third."

"I had a quid on," said Pat, "and the bookie only paid me ten."

"Then he's rooked you. Ten pun—Lord Almighty, what be his name?"

Pat told all about the betting business.

Scunner raged.

Scunner hadn't a big brain and morals were not the only stuffing it contained, but he had very decided opinions on the iniquity of welching and all trickery whatsoever to do with the money side of racing. Doctoring a horse for sale was nothing and in this regard lying and swindling were part of the natural attributes of the dealer to be used when

possible and guarded against as natural conditions like the weather. Doping a horse was wrong, decidedly wrong—but to welch a man or cheat him as Pat had been cheated—these crimes aroused in the narrow brain of Scunner a fury of resentment that might almost be called religious.

"Ain't you going to do nothing?" asked he.

"You bet I am," said Pat.

In his aimless way he had told of the swindle without ulterior motive, but the anger in Mr. Duffield's voice and the wrath in his face gave him a cue.

"I'm going to make him sweat," said Pat.

Scunner suddenly became plunged in gloom. A moment's reflection showed him how Pat was bound. He daren't county court or police court Skrines—couldn't do anything in fact without getting into trouble with his lordship.

Lord Trevessa, on the two visits he had paid to Compton, for the funeral and for the inspection of the estate, had made himself wholeheartedly disliked by all but Mrs. Pounce.

Mrs. Pounce was so constituted by nature and heredity that she *couldn't* dislike a lord, but the others were different.

Trevessa had actually come in contact with Scunner whilst being led round the grounds by the agent.

Scunner had opened a gate for them.

"You one of the keepers?" had asked Trevessa.

"I'm keepin' the gate open for you," had replied the outraged one. "If you're comin' through, come through."

"One of the neighbouring farmers, your lordship," said the agent, "he's here by right of way." And Trevessa passed on, without a "thank you."

The fury of Scunner at having committed an act of politeness paid for by a snub could only be imagined by those who knew him and the fact that he considered politeness and servility as Siamese twins. He hadn't meant to be polite, the act was thoughtless, automatic and done for the agent—and Trevessa had looked at him with those heavy shuttered eyes and asked him was he a keeper and passed on!

He loathed his lordship, but he recognised that Pat would have a very bad time if, attempting to scrag Skrines, his lordship got wind of the business. He said so.

"You wait a minute," replied the other.

Then as they took their seats on a felled tree—he told about Eileen.

Told everything, and of how Chiles had been set to follow him and how he had outwitted Chiles.

Scunner chuckled. The story of that hunt pleased him immensely, but he did not see the bearing of it in the matter of Skrines.

"That's what I'm coming to," said Pat. "She's being led a dog's life by that beast and I'm going to take her away from them. Shut up and listen to me. Doesn't Mrs. Duff want a girl?"

"No, she don't, she's sayin' she does, but she don't; there's no more than she can do. I don't want girls cluckin' about the place. There's the payin' them and the feedin' them and the raisin' them in the morning and the fellows courting them on Sunday afternoons——"

"She isn't that sort," cut in Pat, "and I've got to get her away from there, leaving alone the smack in the eye it will be for Skrines, it's herself—you've never seen her and you can't understand."

"Then," went on Scunner as though deaf to the other, "there's the chance of them playin' tricks and firin' the place. Same as Matilda Bewley did over at the Hall Farm, or that girl of Simmins' over at the Croft; puddin'-faced girl in a yella print dress as ordinary lookin' a dish-smasher as you'd find in the two counties, but she hadn't been with Simmins a day before the tiles began to come off the roof and bricks down the chimney to say nothing of the pictures twistin' round on the walls and voices——"

"Oh, do shut up, Scun. I tell you she's all right. Stick your mind to it and see what we can do."

"Well," said Scunner, "if you're set on getting her away from Skrines the missis would take her right enough if I

tell her, but you can't come canoodlin' after her, not at our place."

"Who wants to, you idiot, you're as bad as old Shutters——"

"*I'm* not botherin'," said Scunner producing the stump of a black clay pipe and proceeding to fill it. "*I'm* not botherin'. If a young chap doesn't make a fool of himself with one girl, he'll make it with another—only I'm *sayin'* you can't come canoodlin' after her not at our place or you'll have the missis in your hair."

"Don't want to."

"Is she clean an' respectable?"

"Yes, rather."

"Well," said Scunner, "I don't mind taking her in if you fetch her away from Skrines; but I'd have to tell the missis the whole story."

"Of course, you can do that."

"You say this chap's been treatin' her bad?"

"Yes, tell the missis that."

"Beatin' her?"

"Well, I don't know, but I expect he has."

"Treated her cruel, anyhow. That'll be enough for the missis. I'll fix it."

Scunner ruminated for a moment in silence. He didn't care a button for Lord Trevessa, in fact if anything had been wanted to tip the balance in favour of this scheme it would have been the knowledge that his lordship had already tried to block the affair——

"Mind you," he said, "I'm talkin' without seein' her, if she doesn't measure up to sample—out she goes."

"Oh, you've only to see her."

"Maybe; but that's my terms."

"Right," said Pat.

"And how are you going to fetch her?" asked Farmer Duffield, as though he were talking of a sheep.

"I haven't fixed it in my mind yet," replied the other. "I'll have to go up to town somehow. I've got money

enough—run up by train and go to Skrines. I can go to ask about that horse—tackle him over Gladiator and tell him he's a sweep——"

"No good," said the other, "he'll boot you out. I know the sort; he's guarded himself safe, it's ten to one you'll have a scrap and the police in——"

"I know. I'll go, and if he opens the door I'll say I want to have a bet on another horse, see. But it's ten to one she'll open the door and I'll shove some money in her hand and tell her where to meet me—or I'll have a taxi waiting and bundle her right in."

"Blither," said Scunner, only "blither" wasn't the word he used, "she in her workin' togs, without a hat, and you and she goin' to the station—why you'd have the dogs runnin' after you."

"Well, I'll think it out."

"Besides," said Scunner, "if you try any of those dodges you may have the police after you, takin' away a girl without givin' notice to her employer from her lawful habitation. Has she a mother?"

"Blessed if I know."

Mr. Duffield smoked in silence for a moment.

"I'll talk to the missis about it," said he at last, "she'll maybe be able to give a hand. Once she knows that chap's been treatin' the girl bad her feathers'll be up. Leave it at that till I see you to-morrow."

CHAPTER XVI

PAT came back along the drive where the ladder-men had fixed the tackle to support the great limb, but he did not stop, he scarcely saw them.

Scunner had filled his mental path with brambles. Many another would have dropped the business there and then. The Long Water was crying out to be fished, the old Ford panting to be driven. There was also a badger in the background promised by Longley of Hill-Shot Rise, it was hutched and waiting for the fetching. Many another would have dropped the London business, but Pat was different from the generality of others. " Absolute disregard of consequences," if you will remember, was the label on the birth luggage given him by the Mahons. This, backed by an invincible determination to get even with Skrines for his dirty trick and a passion for adventurous action were the main powers holding him now to his purpose.

Tell it not in Gath—but the passionate lover, if not vanished had at least drawn back into obscurity, even anger against " that damned Skrines," unsupported as it was by ocular evidence of his ill-doings, had become mixed with a less pure rage due to the Gladiator swindle.

The knight errant had deteriorated and that is a fact, but all the same and as regards the deliverance of Eileen there remained a very efficient moving power.

The same that had climbed the church steeple at Mamsbury and jammed the weathercock because the Mamsbury parson had given offence by a sermon directed at Compton manners and detailed to Pat by Prout.

He turned through the world of the potting sheds and manure heaps to a path leading to the front of the house

and there, before the doorway, was drawn up a taxi with Mrs. Pounce getting into it. Sally, a sort of factotum raised from the scullery to the still room, standing by the taxi door bag in hand.

"Hullo," said Pat, "where are you off to?"

She was off to her sister, Mrs. Todmarsh of Mamsbury, who'd been taken worse and had sent the taxi to fetch her. She would likely be there the night, Burden had the keys of the pantries and be sure and see that the little scullery window was closed. She seemed talking at the same and different times to herself, her asthma, Sally, Pat and Burden the butler, who was standing at the open hall door inspecting the departure.

Then Sally put in the bag and she drove off.

Whew! here was a bramble removed! Compton free of Mrs. Pounce! Even Burden, the solemn and archiepiscopal, seemed to wear a lighter air, and as Pat came into the great hall above which stands the minstrels gallery, light laughter came to him from open doors leading to the interior passages.

Old Pounce gone for the night!

The full recognition of the fact opened sluice doors.

To-day was the day—the old girl would be sure to stick at Mamsbury till late to-morrow. To-day and to-night and a bit of to-morrow were his, an opportunity not to be missed.

He came running up the big stairs and along the corridor to his bedroom, a room with latticed windows opening on a view of the pigeon lofts. He shut the door with a bang and did a double shuffle.

Then he flung on the bed all his money. The fiver of Shutters, the remains of his original two pounds and the ten quid won on Gladiator. Over sixteen pounds. He could hire a taxi if he wanted, but that would be useless. The taxi man might give the show away. Train—no. Pat whistled, a bright idea had come to him, an idea simple and luminous; he laughed, shovelled the money back in his pocket and started from the room.

His hat was below stairs but he was not going in search of his hat. He came along the corridor, dashed up a short stairs to another corridor, narrow and secretive and silent and lit by an amber window at the end. A window whose glass was figured with devices of foliage and grapes.

On a warm bright summer's day this place turned the living sunlight from outside into the light of the past.

Pat opened a door on the right of the corridor and came into a room smelling of cedar. The place was panelled with red cedar and the wall-cupboards, wardrobes and chests of drawers were of cedar. There was no furniture other than these receptacles. This was the cedar room where furs and silks and satins were safe from moth.

Pat knew the place, just as he knew every priest's hole and secret passage and he had seen Mrs. Pounce shaking out and moralizing over the contents of some of the chests of drawers and wardrobes.

Women's toggery.

That was what he had come for now. Scurrner's talk about working clothes and a hat had stuck in his mind. He wanted something that would do temporarily.

His plan was formed but it had still one or two holes. One could be filled by nothing but a cloak or coat and a hat if possible.

He set to work to inspect the contents of the wardrobes.

He heard a far-off hum, rising, falling, broken.

It was the luncheon gong.

He worked all the harder. Brocades, silks, satins, the floor was strewn with them. Ah ! here was something at last, a short cloak that would just fit her, lined with white fur. There were no hats.

He stuffed the litter on the floor back into the drawers and wardrobes, pell mell. There were no hats.

Well, he'd have to think.

With the cloak done up in a bundle under his arm he left the room shutting the door behind him, left the bundle under the bed in his bedroom and came down to luncheon.

"Burden," said Pat, "I'm going out to set night lines to-night."

"Yes, sir."

"I'm going to take the old Ford and go over to the ponds at Longleat, so I mayn't be back till late, maybe not till to-morrow morning, for I might stop at the Burtons."

"Yes, sir."

"Ask cook to make me some sandwiches will you, enough for two."

"Yes, sir."

"It's always well to have enough."

"Yes, sir."

"I'll be ready in an hour."

"Yes, sir."

After luncheon he went into the library and hunted for the road map of the southern counties. Also Bartholomew's Road Surface map of London. He remembered the route taken by Charlie through Hants and Surrey, it was the London part that bothered him—those beastly streets whose names he did not know.

Ten minutes with a pencil and piece of paper however, put him right. Past Brentwood, along Kew Bridge Road, Chiswick Road, High Street, Hammersmith, Hammersmith Road, Kensington Road—no, that was too far—Church Street, Kensington would be best and would take him into the butt end of the Bayswater Road. The map gave the Round Pond and the Broad Walk—and they gave the bearings for Peter Street—and here it was, sure enough—he could almost see Eileen at the door waiting for him.

He jumped up and put the maps away and came out to the stable yard.

Red roofs and the cooing of pigeons, the rasp of a stall chain and a waft of ammonia helped to form the atmosphere of "The Stables"—but to the seeing eye and ear not blinded by the present how much more lay behind. The very silence spoke of the spacious days when Time still

rode in a coach, when horses were horses, carriages carriages, and grooms grooms.

Nearly all the stalls were empty——emptied by the death of the old Squire, but still empty; and these coach houses what did they contain of the glories of the past save the wagonette, a dog cart and the old state glass coach of the Spences that had not been moved on its wheels for half a century; and the grooms and helpers and hangers on, where were they?

The pigeons could not tell.

Pat went to the shed where the Ford resided. It was locked but the key was in the lock and he flung the door open and there stood the thing in all its plainness unrelieved by newly-dried mud on wheels and body.

Jane—that was the name she went by. Labelled by Pat in a freak the name stuck to her and fitted. Some blighter had taken her out and hadn't washed her and, worse, the right front tyre was down. Punctured!

He whipped off his coat.

As he laboured fixing a new inner tube and inflating it his past conduct to Jane came up at him as to a man who, without wilfully misusing, has harried a better half now in delicate health.

Those cross-country journeys and ditchings, those periods of neglect what might they not have done to her—what were her "innards" like, her valves, her blessed differential—? Well, there was no use in bothering now. No time even to clean the mud off her.

He put on his coat. There was petrol enough in the tank to take her to Winchester and having made sure of this he ran her out into the yard and bolted off to the house for the cloak and the sandwiches.

The sandwiches done up in a neat paper parcel were on the great table in the hall, a *Times*, snatched from the newspapers laid out, did him for the wrapping of the cloak. Not a soul about, and with a parcel under each arm the Lord of Compton, his bowler hat on the back of his head,

reached the stable yard where Larry the last of the grooms had materialized.

Larry, a firm henchman of the boy's, had fixed a hose and was unrolling it towards Jane.

"She's all stuck up with mud," said Larry.

"Damn the mud," cried Pat. He cranked her up, flung in the parcels, followed them and stepped on the gas. He had put on the hated bowler as an addition to dignity and respectability in an adventure that might mix him up with speed limits and policemen and all that vague something which was London.

CHAPTER XVII

BUT it didn't bother him. As he passed through Compton well away now, through the glorious weather even the "innards" of Jane ceased to be a subject of speculative disquiet. Luck was with him whereas if Mrs. Pounce's blessed sister had not been taken worse, all would have been impossible—at least very difficult.

The fact that the Duffield end of the business was not properly tied, that Mrs. Duff had not sealed a compact to take in Eileen, that the unfortunate Eileen knew nothing of the rescue party setting out for her deliverance, and that, knowing, she might prefer a certain future in the land of Bayswater to the wild uncertainty offered by the wilds of Compton, all this was nothing to him or at least not fully envisaged.

Also the switchback Winchester road, that paradise of the speed hog, was not conducive to calm and philosophic reflection.

He let Jane out. The speedometer had never been right since an affair with the brakes on Heaton Hill, that is to say it registered fifteen miles an hour when the car was at rest and no less and no more when she was in movement, as now, when her speed was of such a nature that it produced a blue policeman from a green hedge just as heat produces writing in sympathetic ink.

There was no use running with the number plate uncovered. He stopped. The bribe of a sovereign and the title of "sergeant," conferred in conversation, sent the sympathetic policeman back into his hedge, blind to the immediate past—all the same it was a check. He must go

slower, accidents didn't matter a hang as a general rule, but they mattered to-day—and he was forgetting things.

At Winchester where he took in petrol at the first garage, the essential hat came up in his mind.

I doubt if he would have bothered about cloak or hat only for the fact that they had been suggested by the words of the wise and wily Duffield. Any suggestion from that quarter on any subject had weight—of course Eileen might be dressed fit for the street when she opened the door to him, but the chances were she mightn't. It would be dark —or nearly dark—all the same, she'd want a hat.

Good thing it would be dark, for people wouldn't see him shoving the hat on her and the cloak round her—and making her jump into the car.

Car—but he couldn't drive up to the door of 10, Peter Street—hadn't thought of that before. If he drove up and stopped at the door the Skrines would hear him, ten to one, and come out to investigate. He'd have to leave the car at the street corner and make her come to it.

Jane was the devil to crank up sometimes, sometimes quite easy. He saw himself in the dark trying to crank her up, phantom Skrines and policemen making for him and Jane refusing to be cranked—no use in thinking.

"Ladies' hat shop?—Mullins' halfway down the hill on your left," said the policeman on point duty where the London road reduced to a bottle-neck cut Winchester High Street.

"I want a hat, please—for a lady," said Pat to the three damsels behind the counter—Mullins at that hour was empty of customers. "She asked me to get it for her—it's for motoring—Oh, any old thing will do—That looks too big, she's got a small head.—No—it doesn't matter a button about the price—that one—yes, that's the ticket. It doesn't matter a button about a box. I'll take it loose—yes, you can put it in a bag. How much?"

Two pounds five! He cranked up Jane and started—Well, anyhow, the gear was a necessity, as much as nets for

rabbiting—but two pounds five! And a pound to the policeman!—and the price of the petrol.

He had promised himself out of the money he had brought from town, a Hardy split bamboo Mahseer rod for pike fishing in the Long Water, price £11 10s. If this sort of thing went on the rod would have to go, but it was not this fact that gave him his first attack of cold feet; it was the light of the westering sun lying before him on the far-gleaming road surface beyond Basingstoke. A summer shower had passed over here and the effect of the reflected late afternoon light from that distant road to be travelled was in some curious way antagonistic to him as the glitter of the formidable shield of an enemy. Depressing too—all the vastness of London seemed to be hinted at by it. For a moment he seemed up against the impossible and the rotten, but only for a moment.

A bounder in an Overland hooting at him to get out of the way brought him to. Jane responded to the uplift and finished a winner by twenty yards at the cross road which claimed the Overland.

Kew Bridge was passed before full dusk and Chiswick High Road introduced him to the London traffic problem and to the man who rides a bicycle without a rear light. One good thing, Jane had a voice. "Warranted to beat any horn on the road," was the guarantee given with it and the guarantee did not lie.

To-night she sang. You could have traced her through the roar of the traffic down Chiswick High Road, along King Street, across Hammersmith Broadway, down the Hammersmith Road, up Church Street, Kensington, and into the Bayswater Road. At first she sang from pure nerves, then, confidence regained, from relief of mind and arrogance.

The London traffic had been frankly dreaded, it was nothing. The last barrier had been surmounted. The thing was practically done.

She stopped at the corner of Peter Street.

Pat, having backed her with her nose to Queen's Road so as to be ready for a running start, stripped the coverings from the cloak and taking the hat from its bag crammed both under his arm and made for No. 10. He ran up the tread-worn steps and rang the bell. Whew! this was the moment of moments!

"Eileen, come along quick, I've got a car waiting, shove this hat and cloak on—I've got a home for you down in the country.

"Eileen, don't be a fool, *come* on. Well, if you won't come now slip out in ten minutes and you'll find me at the corner."

He had envisaged all sorts of contingencies, her hesitation —refusal—everything but the reality.

The door opened and a sharp-looking little woman stood before him.

"Well, what do you want?" asked this lady of the hesitant caller.

"Does Mr. Skrines live here?"

"He does, but he's out. What do you want of him?"

"I called about a horse."

"What horse?"

"Oh, a horse. I want to back a horse. He takes bets on horses doesn't he?"

A hint of police trouble conveyed by a trusty friend had made the Skrines household wary of strangers.

"Who sent you?" asked Mrs. Skrines.

"No one," said Pat unconvincingly.

"Ho, well Mr. Skrines don't bet on no horses. You go back and tell them that sent you they've made a mistake, see. You get off before Mr. Skrines comes back or he'll clout your head."

Pat came down the steps.

She came out and her voice followed him down the street:

"We don't want no coppers narks crawlin' round our house. Go to them that sent you and give them my com-

plimengs—Mrs. Skrines's complimengs and she'll tie a dish-cloth to their dirty tails, crawlin' round 'er house—see!" The door banged.

Fortunately there were no hearers. All the same the effect was crushing.

Absolute defeat!

Why, why hadn't he done it better? How could he have done it better? Asked about Gladiator; said Charlie Simmins had told him that Skrines took bets?—Yes, and if he had done that the whole show would have been given away—No, it wouldn't, Charlie was pledged not to tell—but it was too late now. He couldn't go back to that house again.

Even if he went back and attacked Skrines about Gladiator it would only lead to a row. Everything was over.

He stood for a moment by Jane. He had backed Jane as already stated with her nose to the Queen's Road, she was not anchored quite at the corner of Peter Street and he could see the people passing along the Queen's Road.

Peter Street was empty. Everything would have been easy if only everything had gone right—and now it was all to do over again in some other way. He threw the hat and cloak in. Then he began to crank up. The engine started to run almost at once and he was opening the door to step in, when from the brightness of the Queen's Road a small figure turned into the darkness of Peter Street.

It was carrying a parcel.

It was Eileen.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHEN Pat failed to keep his appointment with Eileen that day she went home from Kensington Gardens an hour late. She had waited and waited. She had watched the yacht racing in the Round Pond, she had watched the sparrows and the people, she had asked the time of a Park-keeper, and she had asked it again of an old gentleman in a white waistcoat:

"Near twelve." "Half-past twelve, my dear."

Half-past twelve! No, he would not come now. He would never come again. Never would she see him again. Yet she waited on one of the empty seats, rocking the perambulator in which reposed Horatio J. Skrines.

Youth despairs easily, yet clings to Hope.

Eileen had never resented her fate, she knew nothing about anything beyond the ring of the murky world around her. Nature had turned her head to make her look at Pat, and Nature had made her lift her lips to his—but it was all done blindly and the real thing was something else. Something that had little or nothing to do with sex.

The murky world around her had broken and the sun had shone on her. Desolate, without knowing that she was desolate, a companion had suddenly seized her hand, kissed her, filled her life with astonishment and tremulous joy. No fairy of all the fairies of Barrie had ever done anything like this in Kensington Gardens—and now he had gone, this bright companion. He would not come back.

Next day it was the same. Just a chance. No. The boats sailed on the pond and the sparrows bickered and the children played on the grass and the far-off roar of London came across the pretence of the trees.

It all seemed long ago now. Not years ago, but belonging to a time that had nothing to do with clocks or old gentlemen's watches. The day of a world that had been.

If she could only have forgotten !

To-night, the young Skrines being in bed and asleep, the nursery governess had a moment to herself.

Peter Street had its snobbery but after all it is just as cheap to say nursery governess as nursemaid and Mary Louisa Skrines was four and a half and just beginning to read—the nursery governess could read—so there you are.

But she was not reading to-night. She was making a bead bag by the light of a tallow candle, her head bent and her profile shadow cast on the wall.

This room which served as her bedroom had no fireplace, it was papered with a faded paper once pictured with yellow roses, the iron bedstead had cost fifteen and eleven and the window would only open nine inches.

It was open to-night and the girl as she worked could hear an occasional sound from the dogs kennelled in the back-yard and the voice of a late barrow man from Grover Street.

The little bead bag began a month ago and scarcely half done had in its texture far more than thread and beads.

Nearly every bead had a thought clinging to it, a stupid drab thought born of the moment or the recollection of some happening of the day, but there was one glorious half row that ought to have sparkled but didn't. She was trying to complete this row to-night, working against her inclination, just for something to do.

It was no use. She had lost heart in her work ; she was very wretched, her hands were clumsy and her sight bad. She put the thing on the table, there to lie forever unfinished, and clasping her hands in her lap sat idle, her eyes wide-gazing at the floor.

Suddenly she rose.

A voice from below stairs was calling her.

" Eileen ! "

She left the room and came down the rickety stairs. Mrs. Skrines was in the hall.

"Eileen, the beer's out and Mr. Skrines will be in for his supper any minit. Run round like a good gel to the Rose and order half a dozen and fetch one with you—don't need no hat." Eileen departed.

The Rose, a confidential-looking house with a large betting clientele had a side door which opened on a passage which opened on a private parlour.

Eileen knocked at the parlour door and the landlady, a stout motherly-looking woman, took the order and asked her to wait. The bottled beer was out and more had to be fetched up from the cellar and James—the potman—would be free in a minute; she gave the girl a seat in the parlour and fussed off to attend customers, and ten minutes passed. Then she returned with the bottle done up in paper. Eileen took the bottle and departed. She turned the corner of Peter Street, saw a car and a figure standing by it.

"Eileen!"

Him!

She nearly dropped the bottle.

"I've come for you—Here's luck! I've got a place for you in the country." He dived into the car and produced something and shook it out, it was the cloak. He popped it on her: "Come on, stick this on before anyone can see you."

He produced the hat, banged his fist into it to straighten it out and popped it on her head, it went almost over her nose. He burst into a laugh. "Now hop into the car."

She understood nothing, only that he had suddenly come to her again, wrapped a cloak round her, popped something on her head and was pushing her into a motor car to take her for a drive!

Confusion, rapture, terror—Mrs. Skrines! What would she say?—What *would* she say?

The bottle of beer tight clutched in her hand as she sat huddled up in the back seat with the cloak round her was

Mrs. Skrines made tangible in the midst of confusion. Mrs. Skrines saying to her on her return, "Where have you been?"

Then she found voice.

"I can't—not now—to-morrow. What'll Mrs. Skrines say?"

"Bother Mrs. Skrines!" Then he leaned in, standing on the running board and grabbing her by the loose hand.

"I've come all the way from where I live to fetch you. You won't go back to Mrs. Skrines, you'll come with me. If you don't come to-night, I'll never be able to see you again—Come along and don't be a fool, Eileen; I'll always look after you. What are you crying about?—Do you *want* to go back to the Skrines?"

Something tumbled on the floor of the car. It was the bottle of beer released.

"Say you'll come, or I'll never be able to see you again."

No answer, but the free hand joined itself to the other resting on the back of his.

"*Will* you come?"

"Yes."

The answer came in a sigh as from a person dying.

She would have followed him to Hades without a murmur, but the clutch of Mrs. Skrines was still on her.

"I wonder what's delayin' that gel," said Mrs. Skrines ten minutes later as the sound of her husband's feet on the kitchen stairs made itself heard. "Bill, the beer's run out, and I sent young Eileen to fetch it and here's your supper and she gone half an hour and more."

"Drat her," said Skrines, "No, don't dish up—I'll wait."

CHAPTER XIX

THE most difficult thing in the world is to make ordinary people revolt against their fate.

Eileen would have gone on forever in the clutch of circumstance and Peter Street. Even now with the knowledge in her head that Pat had come for her, seized her, carried her off and that she was going to be with him for always, Peter Street had not lost its grip.

Mrs. Skrines was running after the car all down the Bayswater Road, also Skrines and the dogs and the children, and the bead bag and the pots and pans in the kitchen, all like things in a dream, crying, " Hi, hi, where are you going to, come back, come back."

She never doubted Pat, ignorant as the dead, of the world and its ways; she never questioned the future, but she could not escape from the past and environment and the sense of being torn away from everyday into—where ?

She was crying and sniffing when he pulled up in Holland Park Avenue for a moment's talk.

Didn't she want to come with him ? *Yes !* Then why was she crying ? She didn't know.

Pat got in beside her, there were few passers-by to notice Jane with the engine running and the pair in the back seat and taking her hand he told her all about what he had been doing. Of Compton and how he had arranged with a nice lady there to take her. " Jolly good sorts old Duff and his wife, and you needn't bother about anything, they'll get you clothes and things—no beastly children to be wheeled about—only cows and things—and you should see old Duff's ferrets ! Don't *bother* about the Skrines. They don't know where you've gone to ! I'll take care of them. And I'll be able to see you every day."

Well, that was something for her poor stunned mind to cling to.

The sniffing ceased and they sat silent for a moment, he holding her hand.

He felt her hand squeeze his, it was the squeeze of confidence, it said, "I trust and cling to you, you are taking me away from everything I have known—no matter, I am not afraid."

It was at this moment that he experienced his second attack of coldness in the feet.

The whole of this adventure started by the sex push had travelled bumping along all sorts of roads taking petrol from all sorts of sources. From the desire to do Shutters one in the eye, to stick a bodkin into Chiles, to snatch Eileen away from her wretched fate, to prove to her that he wasn't a bounder who had failed in his promise to meet her, and to satisfy the craving of his soul for movement and adventure; all these desires had kept him going and now that the thing was as good as done, enthusiasm was fading. Like the other petrol sources the sex push had petered out. Sex was there but it wasn't pushing. She was no longer a girl with lovely eyes in a print dress; but a creature depending on him; absolutely helpless as a new-dropped lamb with a dead mother.

He had kissed her with passion in the hall of Skrines, but he would not have kissed her now for anything—simply because he didn't want to—all that was gone.

But she remained, and there was Mrs. Duff still to be interviewed and maybe placated.

And there was the long drive back to Compton and the possibility of Mrs. Pounce getting wind of the matter.

Cold feet! But only for a moment.

He'd done the business. Mrs. Duff would be all right. Old Pounce would never find out, Eileen would be happy, he was frightfully hungry, there were sandwiches, but he couldn't eat them till they were clear of London and the traffic.

CHAPTER XX

HALFWAY between Woking and Basingstoke they pulled up to eat the sandwiches. Pat flung the bottle of beer into a hedge. He never drank beer and he wouldn't have drunk Skrines's in any case.

It was a fine moonlit night and to entertain and amuse his companion he tried to explain the mechanism of Jane and what would happen if another tyre went. "For I haven't another inner tube—but it won't—Go on and dig into the sandwiches—you aren't eating anything—Jolly good job it's not raining—isn't it?"

Not brilliant, but the best he could do.

"I say, you should have seen old Mother Skrines's face when she opened the door—went into a blazing paddy and called me a copper shark—she must be off her nut."

Eileen shuddered, she had taken off the hat that was too big for her—she glanced fearfully back along the road they had come by.

"Now what's the matter?"

"Nothing—only—only——" (Sniff)

"You don't want to go back?"

"No," said Eileen. "No—I don't want to go back—I don't want to go back—I don't want——" her lower lip turned out, he took her hand and next moment her arms were round him and she was in a tempest of tears. "I don't—I don't—I don't—Oh, dear me—it's the children—sniff—sniff—I was thinking of—never to see Horry—again—n'matter.—Hold me tight—tight—tight—*Oh* dear me—"

He did as directed.

He was scared as a savage who pulls the string of a shower bath or turns the handle of a musical box, or the first man

who ever pulled the string that starts a woman weeping over something not understandable.

For what reason on earth did she want to see Horatio J. Skrines again ? Why, he was taking her away from all that. He held her and squeezed her as though to squeeze the suffering out of her. It was the treatment indicated by the patient and he didn't know what else to do.

" Do you *want* to go back ? "

No, no, no, she didn't want to go back, she was all right now as long as he held her tight to him. She would be all right in a minute.

Want to go back and he with his arms round her ! She wanted nothing else, and presently Horatio ceased from troubling and her spirit was at rest—and presently, with a great sigh, she released him and drew away and looked around her like a person awakening from sleep.

In some strange way during that crisis, she seemed to have divided herself from her past just as the caterpillar comes out of his coat leaving it behind.

Pat, vastly relieved, saw her smile. He scarcely dared say anything lest she should go off again. He busied himself wrapping the remains of the sandwiches in the paper that had held them. Then he threw them in the ditch.

" Some blessed old field rat will find them."

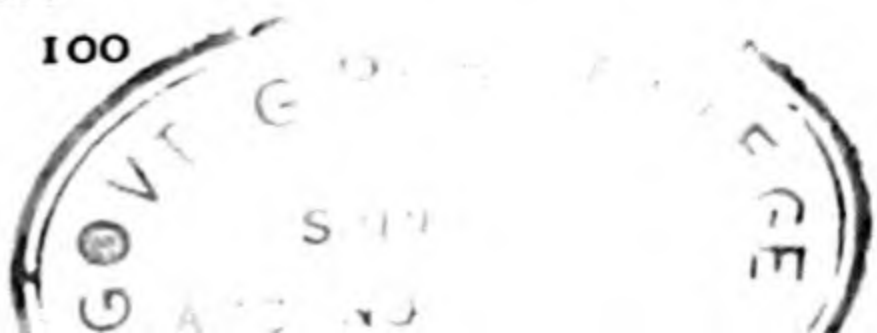
Then, to amuse her, he blew up the paper bag that had contained the hat and burst it with a bang.

" Now we'd better get," said he. " You stick there while I crank her up, and you'd better shove your hat on."

He popped the hat on, almost extinguishing her face, jumped out, cranked up Jane and started.

The road was empty under the moon and he let Jane out explaining across his shoulder that there was no need to be frightened as there was nothing in the way and they weren't doing more than forty.

Beyond Winchester he stopped several times to make sure she was right, and to explain that it wouldn't be long now before they were there.



Their last stop was on Hillborough Rise, a mile from Duffield's farm, by the great singing coppice from which many a fox has started on his last earthly run.

Pat turned to his companion. She was all fallen together in one corner of the seat. He scrambled across to her.

She was dead!

He had seen Betty Mullins taken out of the Long Water all white and loose like that—before they covered her with a tarpaulin.

Everything was scared out of him but the instinct to jump and run—run—run—shouting for Mrs. Duffield.

No she wasn't! Her hand moved.

He drew close as though he were smelling her. She was breathing—why she was asleep!

Oh Lord! The relief! But he was nearly knocked to pieces. It had been like a punch in the solar plexus. Calmly asleep!

He crawled out of the car, took his seat on the running board and lit a cigarette. It was still a good while before dawn, it was impossible to knock the Duffields up at this hour, he'd have to wait.

A questing owl passed in noiseless flight and a night jar called in the coppice and some farm dog away in the distance was giving tongue like a trip hammer.

He never wanted to have anything more to do with girls. He had felt the same about badgers after his first incautious handling of a young one.

Lord! what a scare! You see, if she *had* been dead. He saw himself running for Mrs. Duffield and Mrs. Duffield putting her head out of the window—and Duffield and the farm hands and the police and the Skrines and Shutters and Mrs. Pounce and he trying to explain—and Charlie Simmins and his talk about abducting girls!

No, Pat did not want to abduct any more girls. Once this one was safe with Mrs. Duffield he wanted to leave the country and go to Australia—to-morrow, failing that to stay locked in the house and go to church next Sunday.

What he was really struggling against, besides the fright that had seized him, was the new and unaccustomed sense of responsibility.

Her lament at leaving the Skrines had come as a shock to his understanding completed by the cling of her arms around him.

She wanted to go back or she wouldn't have cried, she didn't want to go back or she wouldn't have said she didn't and clung like that to him.

He was the hub of the whole business.

It wasn't a question of her wanting to escape from Peter Street and of him just opening a door.

He had opened the door and put in his hand and pulled her out and taken her off, almost against her will—at least crying and lamenting about Horry and the children, yet consenting, because of him.

It was all this working vaguely in his mind that made him feel up against something which he had done, which he was responsible for, which was something fateful and maybe wicked.

Oh, why the devil couldn't she have come without all that fuss to the nice place in the country—that was all he wanted, that and outwitting Shutters and Chiles and that beastly Portman woman—and saving her from Skrines. That and the fun of the business.

Somehow it had all gone crooked and worked out against him.

The whole world seemed against him—and there was the uneasy sense that he had been deceiving a whole lot of people—he hadn't set out to deceive them, just had to in the course of business.

There was sure to be a frightful row in London when the Skrines found Eileen gone—he hadn't thought of this before. Would they go to the police ?

Pat had never had dealings with the police except with Willis the Compton constable who was less a policeman than a local character with a taste for beer. But a nurse

had succeeded where Willis had failed in establishing a respect for the majesty of the Law.

"If you don't, Master Pat, I'll call a big blue policeman."

The policeman complex was no doubt assistant in producing the craving for Australia, but no complex could hold office long in a brain so ever abreast of the present.

A shadowy fox stealing from the coppice and passing across the road took fear with it and brought up the vision of Scunner.

"Damn the Skrines and the whole lot of them—Anyhow the thing was done and couldn't be undone."

Presently from the coppice a teeny weeny little thrill of sound came through the dark of the trees.

"Tweet tweet—thrill—thrill—thrill."

A farthing flute announcing through some esoteric knowledge that in the east the vast dome of the sky was tinging with day.

CHAPTER XXI

"SCUNNER—hi! Scunner—Oh, there you are, Mrs. Duff.—Where is he?"

"Lord! Master Pat, what's amiss?"

Mrs. Duff's head and bust broken out of an upper casement window saluted the lovely dawn.

"Nothing," said Pat. "Didn't Scunner tell you—the girl—oh, he did—Well, I've got her outside in the car beyond the hedge—shy on your clothes and come down."

Scunner was out attending to very early morning work not unconnected with night lines.

He had, as promised, explained about the girl the evening before, proving to himself the truth of an axiom learned from experience. "You can't tell how women will take things."

"I don't want no girls of that sort," had said Mrs. Duff. "Been yowling for a girl for months—have I? *Wanting* a girl I've been and well you know it, but I don't want no girl of that sort. If I wanted a girl ever so, I wouldn't look to Master Pat to s'ply me. Why don't he stick to his ferrets? No, not if she was the Princess of Wiles. Beat and abused—I do believe you're as soft as him—and a London girl at that. Yes, I know, *I* know—and I know where the silver tea spoons would be gone to—leaving alone the chance of the house being broke into—pair of sillies."

All this on the pillow in the ear of the tired Scunner.

"I'll be down in a minit," said Mrs. Duff, closing the casement with ominous suddenness.

Pat waited in the growing light, his coat collar up against

the chill of morning and his hands in his pockets, doing a little shuffle now and then to keep himself warm.

Then the door opened. Mrs. Duff had put on a bonnet in her confusion of mind. She hadn't been so upset since her great encounter with Smith the gipsy chicken higgler, an encounter lost, alas ! to literature, conducted as it was in the presence of the unrecording haystack and a ruminating cow.

"Oh, there you are," said Pat. "Come along. She's in the car."

They passed through the farm gate to where the car was standing in the lane.

Eileen had discarded the hat but she was holding the cloak tight round her on account of the chill.

Mrs. Duff looked at the peaky little white face and the grubby hand holding the cloak.

"Well, anyhow, you'd better bring her in and give her something to eat," said she, in the tone of a person finishing a conversation that had not been favourable, on her part, to Eileen.

PART II

CHAPTER I

MRS. DUFF, divested of her bonnet, and frying ham ten minutes later was somewhat a different person mentally, at least, from the Mrs. Duff of ten minutes ago.

There is nothing like a personal interview if you want to do business. The sight of Eileen's white " wisht " face had tempered the instinct to fire her out with the desire to feed her—feed her first, anyhow. The vision of " them London girls " had gone up in smoke before the concrete reality. All the same the lady's busy mind was up against things.

It was as though Scunner or Pat had brought in some helpless animal from the woods to litter the kitchen and give Lord knows what trouble. Of course she couldn't stay, she'd have to be taken back or sent somewhere. The words " Dr. Barnadys Home " heard or read somewhere mixed themselves with the sound of frying. She'd have to be taken off as soon as possible and " put back " or taken to an institution. .The word " workhouse " never occurred to the good lady's mind, a psychological fact difficult to account for, as that was the only institution within her ken.

She turned from her frying to find Pat gone, and Eileen seated on a kitchen chair divested of her lendings and looking round her at the new world in which she found herself. At the eight day clock and Duffield's gun hung over the fire place, at the polished brasses and copper pans, at the apple tree seen through the latticed window ; a world bright and clean and neat and wonderful and— new. New with the sense of newness that comes to us only in dreams or childhood.

* * * *

That night a listener at the door of the chamber of the Duffields might have heard the usual sounds indicating a dialogue in progress.

There was always something to be said when the candle was blown out at night and curiously it was generally something of an argumentative nature.

"Well, if you're bothering about her that much it'd be better to send her right back."

"It's not about her I was botherin'. Lord! I never seen such a man as you for takin' things upside down and wrong ways first. It's not about her I was botherin', but about the candle. I said London girls that's used to gas and such ain't fit to be trusted with candles, and I wished I hadn't given her a box of matches with that candle. Here I'll lay smellin' and smellin' all night for fear of fire, and you snorin'."

"Who's snorin'?"

"You'll be snorin' and me layin' awake."

Mrs. Duffield suddenly and vigorously left the bed, left the room, returned and lay down.

"Her light's out——" A long pause. "I never did see such a thing as her frightened at that cow. She can't 'a never have seen a cow before, and the look of her face when she saw the forty acre and the rabbits playin' by the trees by Parkers, a laughin' look with her mouth open like that oilograph of the little gel the Macketts have over the chiffonier; the one that's dyin' and sittin' up in bed lookin' at the new Jerusalem—and that old print dress—it's a disgrace to be worn, all darns and stitches and no heels to her stockin's."

She had no idea of sending Eileen back, indeed, and the visions of institutions had gone up in smoke like that of the London girl.

Perhaps this easy and perfect acceptance of the stranger was implemented by the stranger's easy and perfect acceptance of herself.

To Eileen Mrs. Duff was somehow part of Pat, so was the

bright kitchen and the golden sunlight and the apple tree and the forty acre meadow, the cow, when properly introduced, and the chickens and ducks; and next day, though Pat was not there, he was scarcely missed, he was round the corner somewhere; and the next, when he burst into the farmyard where she was seated peeling potatoes in the sunshine, a task given to her as "something to do," it was:

"Hello, Eileen—hello, Mrs. Duff, where's Scunner?—Want him? Of course I want him, some beast's been poachin' and shot a fox, it's lying in the ride with a hole in it as big as your head."

Just as though Eileen had been there always and part of the scheme of things.

Forty-eight hours had, in fact, pushed the whole adventure into the past. Mrs. Pounce had twigged nothing and yesterday morning Scunner had told him that "the missus had took to her all right." So that was that, and no further need to bother, and when he ran off, after a five minutes' chat, in search of Willis the village constable, to put him on the heels of that fox-shooting beast, whoever he was, from Mamsbury, Eileen did not feel deserted or lonely—he was there, somewhere. It was as though the new environment so astonishing and so kindly had, in a way, supplanted him, in part. It was him diffused and altered.

Not a word did Mrs. Duff ever say to her about London and the unhappy past. In that lady's mind, conjured up by imagination against the unfortunate Skrines, there were visions of beatings and ill-treatment not to be made subject of talk or questions. She "couldn't a-bear to think of it," let alone speak of it, and it was this vision perhaps that was accountable for her treatment of the stranger, not as a girl to be put to work, but as a sort of invalid visitor. A treatment that had no effect on the will to work in Eileen.

She could not be idle.

If she was not helping in some way in the house she would be stitching or mending. She helped to make the

new clothes, the material for which Mrs. Duff bought her at Mamsbury and she had that about her which betrayed an intelligence and a heart strangely wanting in the ordinary "girl"—forethought.

Mrs. Duff would sometimes find a thing done for her comfort or satisfaction that had wanted doing but about which she had said nothing.

It is a pleasant thing to find oneself surrounded and played about by an intelligence that thinks in kindness for one as well as of one.

Scunner's warning that Mrs. Duff would not stand Pat coming canoodling after Eileen had been forgotten by him and might as well not have been uttered.

Pat now had about as much feeling of that sort for Mrs. Duff. The sudden passion that had started the whole of this business was like a thing grown of London. Even if it hadn't crumpled up under the sense of her helplessness and dependence on him, it would not have lived in the air of Compton, and anyhow it would have been knocked over the ropes in one round by the old Mahseer rod Mr. Adams brought back as a present from his holiday.

No wonder Pat loved that man; spectacled, purblind, always up to his eyes in beastly books that no one could understand, horrified (and indeed rightly) by the sight of a ferret, he had yet discovered and held in his skull the fact that Pat wanted a Mahseer rod. There were several light rods at Compton but Pat had set his heart on a Mahseer and Mrs. Pounce when she saw the price in Hardy's catalogue had given her opinion that his lordship would be horrified at the cost—and here was one, secondhand it is true, but good as new and to be immediately tested.

He would have taken Eileen along to see the fun on the day that he and Duffield, meeting at Duffield's farm, set off to catch the monster pike that inhabited or was said to inhabit the Long Water, only Duffield objected; live bait tin in hand:

"Don't want no girls flibgabertin' about and screamin';

punt's half full of water as it is. Got the rod? Then come along."

But at tea that evening over Mrs. Duffield's hot cakes the ladies had, better than any sight of it, a full and untrue account of how the big pike wasn't caught.

"You saw him Scun, didn't you?—Near six foot, he gobbled the bait and must have spit it out.—All spotted along halfway to his tail. *I* believe he digs in under the willows, it's near twenty foot deep there and I saw him making for it."

One morning at the beginning of August Pat came through the outer yard shouting for Eileen; he wanted to take her to see the new punt that he had screwed out of the agent for the Long Water.

Mrs. Duff objected. She didn't want to see the "gel" drowned. She was in the kitchen making a jam roll and stated her objection as she sprinkled flour on the paste she was rolling.

"She won't be drowned," said Pat. "Duff's there waiting for me and he'll help to pull her out if she tumbles in. No! I was only joking. I won't let her go out in it, she can watch us from the bank!"

Mrs. Duffield knew that he was a man of his word. She called to Eileen to put on her hat whilst the other sampled bits of the raw paste and dug strawberries out of the jam-pot.

Mrs. Pounce's jam was mush, compared to Mrs. Duffield's, and he stated the fact without intent of flattery, then the pair started, Pat leading the way through the farm gate across the lane and through a hole in the hedge leading to the nut grove.

Eileen got half stuck in the hedge, he pulled her through, breaking the bramble that was clinging to her—girls are always getting brambled—and calling to her to come on, struck into the narrow path leading to the firs.

It was always "come on" with Pat.

It was the same with Scunner or old Horniblow or James,

the rat catcher; full of business and always a bit in advance, as now, forgetful of everything but the blazing objective of the punt.

Not that Eileen minded. Flushed and a bit laughing, she came on, happy but a bit timorous of the new world of the trees, a world that had received her with the none too friendly embrace of the bramble. It had torn her skirt a bit—it did not matter.

The path led through the singing pines, into the open and down a slope to the mixed woodland bordering the quarter of a mile stretch of the Long Water.

Here by the bank was moored the new punt in all the glory of fresh varnish, but no Scunner. He had not arrived, but Daddy Ambrose was in evidence.

How Mr. Ambrose had discovered that a new boat had been added to the lake on his estate is immaterial. He knew.

"Where's Duffield?" cried Pat. "He promised to be here—have you seen him?"

Daddy shook his head, meaning to imply that he knew nothing of the matter. His eyes were fixed on Eileen.

He drew Pat a bit aside.

"Where has *she* come from?" asked he.

"London," answered Pat.

Mr. Ambrose pulled his beard.

"What is her name?"

"Eileen."

"Eileen what?"

"Blessed if I know," said Pat.

As a matter of fact he had never bothered about any other name. She was Eileen and that was enough. Mrs. Duffield knew her surname for she had asked it.

"And who brought her from London?" inquired Mr. Ambrose.

"I did."

"And where did you find her?"

"I don't know. I just met her."

"Just met her?"

"Yes—There's Scunner. Come along, Scun—hurry up."

He jumped into the punt and assisted by Duffield pushed her out.

The girl and the hermit of Compton watched the boating party for a minute, then they began to talk.

Eileen felt drawn to the little old man at sight, as he to her. Possibly it was the youth they shared in common that was the bond of attraction.

They sat down together on the sunlit bank and having mentioned to her the fact that there was a very old pike in the Long Water whom he, Mr. Ambrose, had known for years, a pike that was much too clever to be caught, he began to talk about rabbits.

He knew a lot about rabbits, and Eileen had learned enough of those fascinating people since her coming to the Duffields to make the subject of interest, she had seen them playing on the edge of the wood, but she did not know that they had houses underground.

"Houses and streets but no rent to pay, for it is the rents, my dear, that make living so hard to the poor man, and they never eat meat, just grass and leaves and they never are cold for God has given them each a fur coat. Even the babies are born in fur coats—Quite happy but for Man who sets traps for them. Traps." He described this business. "A-ha," finished Mr. Ambrose with a chuckle, "traps—and I search for the traps and for the snares and take them away or break them. But you must never tell anyone this, my dear, you are the only person who knows of it."

Shade of Scunner! So this was the mysterious something or another that had turned the work of the trapper so often to waste and his tongue to profanity.

"There is no use in talking to a rabbit," went on the Sage after a moment's pause, "if you sit still they come around you and play and tell you all about themselves, but if you begin to talk to them they just run away. There's no use

in telling them to beware of traps—they won't listen.—What is your name ? "

" Eileen."

" What is your other name ? "

" Williams."

" Eileen Williams. Where is your mother ? "

" She's dead."

Poor Eileen faltered and her eyes filled.

" And your father ? "

" No," said Eileen controlling herself. " I never remember having a father."

" And God just brought you here."

To Eileen it seemed that it was Pat and the old Ford, but she said nothing, her eyes fixed away to where the punt was wobbling along by the other bank.

" When I was young," said the Hermit, " I had a father and a mother but they lived in a house. That was why I left them. I was unhappy. Then I lived in a city and I was more unhappy.—It was all very long ago and since then I have lived among the trees."

" Haven't you a house ? " asked Eileen.

" Well in a way—in a way, but no chimney——" Mr. A.'s tone grew a trifle testy, " nothing that you would call a house. Just my own place, made by myself. God showed me how to make it where the fir trees keep the snow off in winter. Everything wicked comes from houses." The philosopher twisted his beard till it became thin as a cow's tail. " Bricks and mortar, bricks and mortar that is the story of man's downfall from a happier state. It began with the pyramids and it hasn't ended yet. You see it's ownership that has done it—do you know what a landlord is, my dear ? "

" Yes," said Eileen, " he's the man who comes for the rent."

" Yes, the man who comes for the rent—and why does he come ? What right has one man to come to another for rent—answer me that ? "

"I don't know," said Eileen, following a butterfly with her eyes. "I suppose it's because he wants it."

"Just so, because he wants it, but is that a reason why he should get it? No, my dear it is not—but it is all very difficult because people won't see."

"I would like to come and look at your house," said Eileen. "I mean——"

"And you shall," said he.

And she did.

Duffield took her along one day to the quaint shack under the firs, and one day Pat gave a party there with tea in a thermos flask and cakes supplied by Mrs. Duffield. Mr. Adams was bidden to the feast and he came spectacles and all and they sat on a carpet of pine needles whilst the wood doves comforted Susie and the last of the cuckoos, hoarse from a season's hard work, saluted the gorgeous day.

Adams, Pat, Eileen and Daddy Ambrose, an incongruous crowd made congruous by innocence.

"And who is that nice little girl?" asked Mr. Adams when they had seen Eileen off on the path that led to Duffields.

"Oh, she's Eileen, she lives with the Duffields," replied Pat with a laugh. It was on the tip of his tongue to tell the other all about Eileen and how he had fetched her from London, but something held him back.

If he had told I doubt if Adams would have seen anything wrong in the transaction, excepting of course the deceptions that Pat had practised.

Nor would he, during the month that followed, have discountenanced the relationship of this pair or their occasional meetings—and rightly enough, though, as a matter of fact, Eileen had become part of Pat's little world, a dangerous part for any girl to play—at least a part that may lead to danger.

The fact that he didn't see her much did not make any difference. He did not see the ferrets much but they were there to be seen when wanted. It was the same with Mrs.

Duff; her death or removal would have had a profound effect upon him, her existence produced little or none. She was there!

Eileen was there and that was enough.

He was too busy to bother about her as a rule, all the same she was even more "there" to him than Mrs. Duffield.

Out of sight Mrs. Duffield never strayed into his mind, out of sight Eileen sometimes did.

His affectionate nature had linked itself more closely to Eileen than to Mrs. D. For one thing Mrs. D. wasn't improving in looks day by day, Eileen was.

Nearly three months of Compton had improved her greatly. Like some poor plant starved of light in a cellar, she was feeding on the sun.

"That gel gets better-looking every day," said Mrs. Duff to Scunner, and no doubt Pat not caring, but having eyes, noted the same fact.

All the same I think it is highly probable that the intimacy would never have gone back to the kissing point, that time would have gently sundered the two, that Eileen would have drifted into the arms of young Samuel Mackett who had already marked her down as an object to gaze and goggle at during church time, and that Pat might have danced at her wedding with a whole heart—I think that all this might probably have happened if fools had only kept out of the business, with an attempt to tear her from his world by force.

And this is how it happened.

CHAPTER II

ON the second of September Chiles, his lordship's factotum, barber, valet, and trained spy, pursuing an inquiry of some weeks duration had come down on Charlie Simmins, the chauffeur.

The petrol bill for some months had suggested to Chiles that Charlie must be washing the cars with it as well as using it for propulsive purposes; then there was a repairs bill that seemed wanting repairs, but the head of the abscess was a five shilling postal order left by an under housemaid on the kitchen dresser to pay as a month's instalment on a pearl and diamond brooch.

Charlie had stolen the order.

Chiles had convicted him.

Charlie was not exactly a thief, but he was weak. Convicted and threatened with the police "unless he told all," he cried like a child and confessed like a good Catholic, and made extra confessions to propitiate the gods that had seized him.

"I didn't make to do it, Mr. Chiles, it took me of a sudden, same as the chap with the petrol and the repairs bill. I'm not a hiding sort, I'd have come and told you right away for as soon as I put my hand to it and got the money, my heart went against it, and I'll tell you more, Mr. Chiles, I want to have nothing on my mind to repent of; you remember comin' to me and mentioning a skirt, Mr. Chiles? Yes, that was the one, the nipper with a p'rambulator Master Spence was carrying on with. I said I didn't know about no skirt, and I didn't know about no skirt, but I found out from him there was. You might have knocked me down with a feather, Mr. Chiles. It was

Mr. Skrines's Eileen. Maybe you've read in the papers about a girl missing in Bayswater, went out for a bottle of beer and never come back. That's her. Mr. Skrines's Eileen. He took her. I didn't dare say nothing, for he'd told me he was goin' to take her and he made me swear to keep a shut head. Threatened me he did. I was in fear of my life of him for it's nothing he'd stick at. I *told* him, 'Don't be abductin' no girls,' said I, 'there's a piece in *Reynolds*' about a chap that's got six months for takin' a girl from her paryents,' I said, and 'Put your head in a bag,' says he, 'and I'll cut your liver out if you peach,' he says. Dreamin' I've been of it at nights—Where has he got her? Compton he said he was takin' her to, and, wherever she is, he's got her, for she's gone from Skrines."

If you can imagine the feelings of a man who boring for water strikes an oil gusher, you can imagine the feelings of Mr. Chiles.

Charlie was whirled before his lordship and the story told, with no mention of petrol, repairs bills or five shilling postal orders. You don't talk of sardines when you have caught a tarpon.

"Let me clearly understand this matter," said his lordship. "Chiles, you informed me that you followed Mr. Spence that day yet saw nothing of a girl."

"He led him a dance, took him to the Tower—he told me," cut in Charlie, "told me he knew he was being followed."

"He must have found I was following him," acceded Chiles. "I tracked him right back here and he did not go out again that day. It was late when we got back."

"And next day," said his lordship, "he told Simmins that he intended to take the girl away to Compton where a man would look after her. Did he mention the name of the man?"

"Scunner Duffield," said Charlie.

The name was a name to stick and it had stuck.

"Ah, Duffield," said his lordship, "and shortly after the girl was missing from the Shines."

"Skrines, your lordship," put in Charlie. He was quite perking up, the iniquities of Pat somehow seemed to relieve the pressure upon him.

"It is immaterial," said Lord Trevessa. "The question is how did he meet this girl? He was in your charge, Simmins, on the first day of his stay with me, did you see anything of a girl then?"

"No, your lordship," replied Charlie, and he spoke the truth.

"Next day," went on his lordship, "a lady saw him bidding good-bye to a nurse girl and making an appointment with her to meet her on the morrow. Well, we know the rest. I will investigate this matter myself. You will say absolutely nothing of the matter to anyone, either of you—no one else knows."

"No, your lordship," said Charlie. "I've only just told Mr. Chiles, it was eating so in my mind."

"Very well," said his lordship, "that will do. I shall go down to Compton to-day."

"Now, young feller-me-lad," said Chiles, when he had got the satellite outside, "you've had your lesson and you never stick your hand in the till again or you'll have the police on you in earnest. Remember I've got this against you cut and dried. Now get off and clean your cars."

Mr. Chiles was not averse from condoning the business of the petty thefts and saying nothing about this to his lordship. He had a theory that all servants are thieves and he had this one in a halter. Besides, it would have been bad policy to dismiss or prosecute in this case where it was essential to keep Pat's iniquities from the Public.

Charlie dismissed without a character and let loose in public houses, or prosecuted and in the dock, might set his confession pump going—or tell simply from spite.

Chiles had many bad qualities but he would not have made a bad Prime Minister—in some ways.

Shutters, left alone with his thoughts, paced his library.

Chiles in the *précis* he had given of the case had told of the alarming fact that the disappearance of the girl had caused great commotion in Bayswater.

If this should get into the papers!

Then the young scoundrel had her down at Compton. He remembered the name of farmer Duffield mentioned by Adams in his letter. *That* must be put a stop to. The girl must be got away, brought to London—sent abroad. Yes—sent abroad. Or the family solicitor might interview the Skrines. One comfort, Pat was so young—was he too young to be prosecuted?

But first—first, the ground must be made sure of.

The whole thing had thrown the nobleman's mind into confusion and agitation. He was due to speak that day at the great Conservative gathering to take place at the Carlton Club. Smethwick the Conservative party's general manager and business boss, had tried to evade the responsibility of inflicting Shutters upon the meeting but without success. S. was a pillar of the Party and when a pillar wants to speak it's best to let it—and he wanted to speak.

Like a child robbed of its toy he stood looking at the notes for the oration lying on the table, forever useless now.

Then he rang for Chiles.

Chiles re-entered the room, a valet now pure and simple.

"Pack some things for me," said his lordship, "I will have to stay the night at Compton. No—I shall go by train—wire the Spence Arms at Mamsbury to have a car to meet the train, find out and arrange about the train."

Then he took up the telephone. Smethwick was at the office, he was deeply concerned to learn the sad news.

"It's a bit of a blow," said Smethwick. "I'd looked to

you—well—well—we must just make the best of it. I hope it's nothing serious——"

His lordship departed for Compton feeling that he had left a hole in the Conservative Party, let down the Government and put a log on the fires of Bolshevism.

A compound feeling that did not increase his admiration for the doings of Pat.

CHAPTER III

IT was five o'clock and Mrs. Duffield had just laid the tea, the kettle was boiling and Scunner was washing in the back kitchen. Eileen was due in, she was out looking for mushrooms in the forty acre but she would not be late.

One of the things that endeared her to Mrs. Duff was her punctuality, she had no watch, but like an animal she had a sense of time and she never kept meals waiting and the meat cooking to rags.

It had been a crooked day. Melancholy squawkings at dawn had proclaimed the fact soon verified that a fox had paid a visit to the hen roost, one of the pigs had developed symptoms that might be the prelude to measles and something had happened to the last batch of jam—it would have to be re-boiled.

She was in the act now of heating the tea pot when a sound from the lane outside proclaimed the approach of a motor car. It stopped at the gate.

"I wonder what's up now?" said Mrs. Duffield, visions of Government swine fever inspectors rising before her heated imagination. She was putting down the tea pot to investigate when a knock came to the door, the door opened and Lord Trevessa stood before her.

"Excuse me," said his lordship, "but is this Mr. Duffield's?"

"Yes," said the lady, "this is Duffield's, what might you want with him, sir?"

"I am Lord Trevessa and I have come to make inquiries about a young girl who I learn is staying with you."

"I beg your pardon," said Mrs. Duff, pulled between

respect for his lordship and a vague suspicion that something was up, something to match the jam and fox and pig troubles. "I beg your pardon, but how were you meaning?"

"The girl," said Shutters with a touch of irritability in his voice, "the girl whom I believe you are sheltering. I have come to make inquiries, to ascertain the facts."

"Do you mean young Eileen?" asked Mrs. Duff.

"I don't know her name," replied Lord Trevessa, "I only know that I have been informed that a young girl from London——"

"That's her. Well, what about her?" Mrs. Duff's voice had suddenly caught something from the voice of the other and Scunner in the back kitchen grinned as he listened. He was far too wary a bird to mix in the business yet. He listened, his eye on the backyard and the distant view of the forty acres where the figure of Eileen could be seen, basket in hand, and wandering homewards, hunting for mushrooms as she came.

"Just this," said his lordship, "as you must very well know, she has been taken from her proper guardians. People named Skrines, and brought here. I have come to take her back."

Scunner left the back kitchen, crossed the yard and running to Eileen took the basket from her.

"Bunk off to Daddy Ambrose—bunk off to Daddy Ambrose," said Scunner. "Hide there till I come for you, quick, or the Skrines will have you."

Eileen gave him one look, caught her breath back, turned and ran.

He came back to the house.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Duff, twisting her apron in her hands, stood dumb. She was only winding herself up. Then she went off.

"Proper guardians—Skrines—Proper guardians! Them that beat her and bruised her and half starved her and you dare to come into my kitchen and talk of proper guardians.

I don't care if you were the Lord A'mighty—*you* come to take her back! Let me get my nail in them. Only for Master Pat taking her away from them beasts she'd be dead by this——"

"My good woman—my good woman——"

"Your good woman—who are you talkin' to?—I want to have no dealin's with you, you're as bad as them, let them do their own dirty work. Let them——"

Scunner entered.

"Hello," said Scunner.

"Come to take Eileen back to them beasts," cried Mrs. Duff, pointing at the Conservative Party.

"Come to——"

"Oh, shut up," said Scunner, with a glance that told her he was going to take charge. "What is it, your lordship?"

Arrived to confront the connivers with Iniquity and faced with patent honesty and live indignation his unfortunate lordship was all at fault. It was almost as though he had been half convicted of beating and starving an unfortunate named Eileen—a confederate of people named Skrines. Unfortunately he had let his tongue take charge of him in the opening of the duet with Mrs. Duff. He had declared that the girl must be returned to Skrines—it was a *lapsus linguæ*, he meant no such thing, Skrines must know nothing of Pat's part in the business, nothing of the business. The very name "Skrines" set his teeth on edge. It seemed they were maltreaters of children, yet he had, by his tongue anyhow, allied himself to them.

Yet it was not in his nature to make explanations.

"I have already described to this good—er lady, the business I have come upon," replied he. "I have——"

"He's come to take her back to them beasts," cut in Mrs. Duff. "No use beatin' about the bush and pump-handlin' with your hand—and don't be calling me a lady—I ain't a lady and I ain't good, but I'm better than the likes of them that starves unfortunate children and calls themselves Christians."

"I saw young Eileen runnin' away into the wood," said Scunner, as though some great fact had just struck him making him forgetful of everything else. "She came runnin' out of the back kitchen and away into the wood, she must have been listenin' to you. By any chance did she hear you sayin' she was to be took back to Skrines?"

"Course she heard him saying it if she was there," said Mrs. Duff.

"Then she's gone and done it," cried Scunner striking his head with the flat of his hand. "She said she'd drown herself rather than be took back, and she was makin' towards the Long Water."

He turned and dashed from the kitchen. Mrs. Duff sat down on a chair and flung her apron over her head and his lordship with a glance at her and a word or two turned and left the place to find the car.

All this bunkum had produced very little effect on him.

Girls don't drown themselves as a rule; Duffield had gone in pursuit of her. Leaving aside everything else, he had nothing on his conscience. He had acted perfectly correctly and as a guardian ought to have acted. Secure in this fortress girls might be drowning themselves by hundreds in the moat. It would be no fault or concern of his.

He had acted as a guardian ought to act and he intended so to continue.

The car took him out of the lane on to the road and through the gates of Compton to the hall door.

Mrs. Pounce, apprised by a wire, was waiting on the steps to receive him.

A footman brought in the luggage.

"Let the car come back for me to-morrow morning at ten," said his lordship. "Come into the library with me, Mrs. Pounce——

"Mrs. Pounce, what is all this about a girl?"

Mrs. Pounce standing with her fingers resting on the library table opened her eyes.

"A girl, your lordship?"

He saw at once that she knew nothing and was innocent. He proceeded to instruct her.

Under the course of instruction Mrs. Pounce did something she would never have done in her right mind. She sat down on a chair in his lordship's presence! Her legs had gone.

"Mr. Adams knows no more of it than me," she said in reply to a question—"It's the Duffields. I never did hold with him running about with Scunner—Oh, there he is!"

Pat, who had heard the car and come to investigate, appeared at the library door.

"Come in," said his lordship.

Pat came in closing the door behind him.

"Oh, Master Pat," said Mrs. Pounce. "What *have* you been doing, what *have* you been doing——?"

"Doing!" said Pat—then turning to the other, "I beg your pardon, sir, what is it?"

His lordship gave a horrid little laugh.

"Oh, nothing," said he heavily. "*Absolutely* nothing—that is to say if the practice of deceit and the employment of falsehood is nothing—if breaking the law of the land is nothing. Can you stand there, sir, and look me in the face and propound that absurd question, knowing, as you must know, the act you have committed in taking a girl——"

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Pat, horribly flushed yet keeping his chin up, "I know what you mean. I'm sorry. I'm beastly sorry—but I couldn't help it."

"Couldn't help it—are you then not responsible for your acts?"

The most terrible thing to the young is sarcasm employed by an elder, it reaches right through the soul and turns out all sorts of pockets.

"I meant, sir, I couldn't help saying nothing about the business. If you'd *asked* me instead of saying nothing yourself and setting that man on to follow me, I'd have told you."

This was pretty astute. Pat was surprised at it himself. Maybe it was old Levy Mahon the miser and politician "Icicle Mahon" who had come down some back stairs in the Fourth Dimension to take a hand in favour of his last descendant.

Whether or no the intervention did little good; in fact it highly incensed Lord Trevessa.

"You are standing on a quibble, sir," said Rostrum. "As a guardian, dealing with rank deception and what demonstrated itself either as utter folly or incipient vice; and let me say that not only is vice folly, but folly is indeed a lower form of vice; as I say, as a guardian dealing with rank deception and what exhibited itself as imbecility or salacity, it was my duty to use all the means in my power not only to hedge you from your fault, but to acquire data that might assist me in the reading of your true character.

"You were seen, sir, not only taking leave of, but making an assignation with, a nurse girl wheeling a perambulator in the open street, a nice exhibition for one of your standing—a nice exhibition, truly. But you were not seen, sir," suddenly thundered Rostrum, "spiriting this girl away from her home, taking her from her duties, conveying her by what means heaven only knows to Compton, rendering yourself amenable to the criminal law and in short—in short—doing this, doing this and then daring to stand before me accusing me of having you followed. Followed, forsooth! But enough. You will go, sir, now, and pack your things and get yourself in readiness to accompany me back to town to-morrow, then we shall see what arrangement I can make for your future—that is all at present."

He made a movement of dismissal with his hand.

"I don't want to leave here, sir," said Pat. "I have done nothing at all. What on earth is the good of making out things—yes, I did meet Eileen and she was wheeling a perambulator and that b—I mean, Miss Portman saw us and I took her away and brought her here because she was unhappy. She's happy here, why can't you leave her

alone? I mean to say, what's the good of making a row about nothing?"

"We will talk about this in London to-morrow," replied his lordship.

"I won't go to London," said Pat, dropping all respect for his elders, "if you take me there I'll run away and go to sea."

"O-ho!" said Lord Trevessa.

"Master Pat! Master Pat!" moaned Mrs. Pounce. "Oh, Master Pat, what *are* you saying?"

Lord Trevessa turned and looked out of the window.

The unfortunate gentleman's tongue was always somehow a bit in advance of his mind.

He did not want in the least to take Pat to London. London with a boiling Conservative Party called back from its holidays to face an internal crisis on the one hand and Pat rebellious and "framing" to run away to sea on the other was a prospect not at all pleasing. Why had he started such a hare? But there was Duty! A sudden and saving thought entered his head. He turned to his ward.

"I want you clearly to understand," said he, "that in this matter, I am acting not for my own pleasure, but for your benefit. I have left important business in London to come here to-day. You say you will not come to London, and that if you come you will run away to sea. Very well. I am not a gaoler, nor would I use brute force. You must understand that you are an individual, that is to say a being gifted with mind and free will. Should you elect to destroy your future, no doubt—no doubt you can effect its destruction. But it is my duty to attempt to preserve you at least from the worst effects of your faults. You shall stay at Compton—under restrictions. That is all." He waved his hand.

"And Eileen, sir?"

"Go," said Lord Trevessa, pointing to the door.

Pat went white. Mrs. Pounce had never seen him go white before.

That word "go," and that gesture as though he were a slave, God's truth! If he had had a knife or a stone in his hand he might have made a hole in the Conservative Party then and there. He turned mad and blind with rage, and rushed from the room, leaving the door wide open.

Lord Trevessa shut the door.

"Mrs. Pounce," said Lord Trevessa. "Telephone to London for my man Chiles to come direct by car arriving here to-night. Mr. Adams is quite useless with such a danger. We want a strong man here."

That was perhaps the truth. Lord Trevessa felt himself utterly unequal to cope with youth in this peculiar form. Adams was no doubt an estimable man, but not strong, under his eyes or rather under his spectacles all this had gone on unnoticed, Mrs. Pounce was quite useless; there remained Chiles.

Chiles was the person to cope with the situation. To get rid of the girl, to supervise Pat's movements and to prevent clandestine meetings. Chiles was strength and discretion.

The idea of dismissing Adams had occurred to his lordship, but he thought better of it. A new tutor might be as blind or perhaps worse in other respects—Chiles would be enough to safeguard matters—just Chiles.

CHAPTER IV

MEANWHILE Pat had torn off to Duffield's farm. He found Scunner in the kitchen finishing a belated tea and Mrs. Duff with her bonnet on and packing a basket with eatables, and an atmosphere of excitement, upset and rag-chewing only to be hinted at. The very cat looked different.

"Where's Eileen?" cried Pat.

They told him, Scunner munching and Mrs. Duff with bonnet strings flung back.

"It's fine dry weather and she can stick with Daddy Ambrose," said Mrs. Duff, "and if they come here after her I'll wring their tails."

"Garn," said Scunner, "they won't come here. It's the old chap, not them—but she can hide with Daddy for a day or two, if you want."

"He said he was going to take me to London," put in Pat, "and I told him I wouldn't go and that I'd jolly well run off to sea if he tried it, so he caved in and said I could stay, but he has something up his sleeve."

Mrs. Duff having finished packing the basket of provisions for Eileen, started to deliver it, Pat accompanying her.

They found her in the old man's shack. He had turned out giving it up to her, comprehending the whole position with amazing clearness once it had been explained to him.

Anything against law, order, or the social state as represented by Capital was easy of comprehension to Daddy.

Eileen was being pursued by employers for the purpose of dragging her back to slavery, that was enough for *him*.

But there was much more than that. Eileen, simple and childlike, had got into his heart—the place where he kept

the rabbits and squirrels and such things. Pat had got there long ago, but what Pat had been years in doing Eileen had done in a month.

Anyhow there they were, his children in a way—at least the children of his affections, not to be parted from one another or from him.

Whilst Mrs. Duff and the old man's tongues wagged, Pat got into the shack beside Eileen.

She was hiding like a hunted thing.

Peter Street, whilst she lived there, had not seemed worse than any place else. Seen from Compton as a prospect in the past it looked grey and grim, seen as a place of possible return it looked like hell.

"You won't, you won't," said Pat, holding her hand. "I won't let them. I swear that—Eileen dear, don't cry. I won't let them. You'll stay here always—always." Then, carried away by his feelings, by her helplessness and by a sudden new something just forced to birth in his mind he kissed her.

Her tears ceased as if by magic, she drew a long breath and her arms went over his shoulders. Alack and alas! if they had only left him alone, left her without threat, this might never have occurred. But it had occurred, like the locking of a mechanism.

She clung to him in silence. They could hear the voices of the two people outside, voices that only increased the atmosphere of secrecy and subtle newness that surrounded them. Then without a word, without a kiss, he squeezed her to him. All the kisses, all the words in the world would have been nothing compared with that silent embrace.

Then he came out of the shack and stood up looking dazed and not seeing for a moment that Mrs. Duff had taken her departure. He said good-bye to the old man and came back to the house running, his head full of foolish half-formed plans—he would do this and he would do that—Go for Shutters right away and tell him—what?

No, on second thoughts and with a mind cooled by run-

ning, he saw the stupidity of any move until he found out what the other was going to do. He knew only one thing for certain, whatever they might do he was not going to be separated from Eileen.

He was fast asleep and snoring when Chiles arrived by car at half-past eleven that night.

CHAPTER V

WHOEVER has taken over the post of guardian—either of paupers or children—has taken over trouble. Lord Trevessa, who had plenty of maxims fit for speeches had not that in his book to help him meet the wild surprise of Pat's doings.

Also though an estimable man, he was a bit old-fashioned; Conservatives tend that way. He believed in Authority. He had power over Pat—or fancied he had—and the idea of a heart to heart friendly talk over a matter of discipline with a young person in his power never occurred to him.

He was acting within his lights as well as within his rights and indeed and on the face of it and leaving friendly negotiation aside, one cannot see how he would have done otherwise or taken any other course than that which he was now taking.

To remove Pat to London was impossible, to send him to a school was impossible—he was too old, even if the Squire had not left those instructions. To send him travelling with Mr. Adams or some unknown tutor? No, Lord Trevessa did not want to be summoned suddenly maybe to Paris, Vienna or Berlin. A long sea voyage? One might be summoned to Australia. There was nothing to do but keep him at Compton. Lord Trevessa in fact was afraid of Pat. Not physically afraid but mentally. Stories of his very young doings half heard and half remembered were fermenting in his mind, like Mrs. Pounce's raspberry jam that required re-boiling, and in the fermenting mass lay the solid present facts.

There was nothing to do but keep him at Compton under surveillance and attempt if possible to get the girl out of

the neighbourhood—at all events they must be kept apart.

After the 'phone message for Chiles had been sent, another bright idea took him. Amula Portman (such was her Christian name) was, in a way, one of the family. Excellent idea! Why had he not thought of this before. He sent her a telegram (telephoned to Mamsbury) that cost three and eleven pence. Then he went to dress for dinner, which meal he took in company with Mr. Adams.

CHAPTER VI

"MIND the spade you fool! Mind the spade you fool!" Eileen was down a fox earth and they were digging her out, old Horniblow delving and Scunner and Shutters and Mrs. Pounce looking on. Then he awoke to find the sun looking into the room and the vision gone.

All the same old Horniblow had been digging like a fool—if she *had* been there!

Pat leaned out of the open casement which showed the Dutch garden.

At this hour, with the early sun on its mullioned windows, its rose-red twisted chimneys, its clipped yews and the white wings of its pigeons, Compton was a dream. But Pat saw nothing much but the carrier that had lost itself and lost the ring on its leg and settled down to a life of idleness and food cadging at this inn by the way. Some time soon it would disappear as mysteriously as it had come after the fashion of lost carrier pigeons. He whistled to it, withdrew, and began to dress.

The hutched badger, mentioned aforetime, had arrived and been payed for, reducing his stock of money considerably. Disturbed by the journey, it had gone on hunger-strike. It had to be visited first thing.

Larry, the stable man, was already in attendance on it when Pat made his appearance in the yard. Larry was always able and willing to be on any job but the job he ought to be doing. He was an importation of the old Squire's, and Ireland was the country from which he had been imported owing to a deed of daring at the Dublin Horse Show by which a girl's life had been saved.

"Come with me to England and I'll fix you up for life," had said the Squire.

That was ten years ago.

He had never mixed properly with the more heavy-witted Hampshire servants. His mentality was quite different, he had parts. Imported into America he would by now, without doubt, have been an alderman, maybe the embryo of a millionaire; here he had become just what he was. Under the old Squire's will by which all the servants had benefited Larry Fagan was secure for life. He would have to be pensioned if dismissed and he had a life tenure of his cottage—all the same, that was a poor substitute for the future that might have been his in America.

He had a brother in Scotland doing well as a farmer and he had been several times up to see him on holiday. They were both hell-hot Republicans, a bond between them stronger than brotherhood. Pat and Larry had always got on together. Before Pat had been allowed to raise a gun to his shoulder Larry had made him a catapult, it was Larry who had instructed him in the use of parsley as an antidote to the smell of tobacco, it was Larry who had stood between him and the wrath of Mrs. Pounce on several occasions.

In the education of Pat what Scunner left undone, Larry completed. This gentleman had no use for Law and constituted authority. Faithful and attached to the old Squire he had neither fidelity nor attachment towards such people as Mrs. Pounce or his Lordship.

He knew all about the Eileen business—he was a friend of Duffield's as well as Pat's.

"He's pickin' up and eatin'," said Larry with reference to the badger. "A big brute of a baste he is too. Who's the chap that came last night from Mamsbury by car? Do you know by any chance?"

"What chap?"

"I dunno. Roberts the footman told me a minit ago

when I was in the kitchen lookin' after a cup of tea that a chap had come by car with little side whiskers on him and he thought he was his lordship's man, for Mrs. Pounce's bunking him in the old butler's bedroom."

"Lord!" said Pat, "it can't be that beast Chiles!"

"Who's him?"

Pat told of Chiles.

"Well," said Larry, "Roberts said from what he could make out from Mrs. Pounce, he believed the chap was stayin' to look after things—whatever he meant by that."

"He's a sneaking brute," said Pat, "and if Shutters is sticking him here to spy on me—I'll—by Gosh, *I*'ll teach them—you know he's heard about Eileen?"

"Who?"

"Uncle—that's what brought him here yesterday; wants to send her back to those people."

"The ones that leathered and starved her?"

"Yes. He wanted to take me away to London, but I said I wouldn't go—then he said I could stay here but that he'd restrict me—that's what he said."

"Where's the geril?" suddenly cut in Mr. Fagan.

"She's with Daddy Ambrose. Shutters went to Duffield's and kicked up a row saying she was to be sent back, so Mrs. Duff whipped her off to Daddy's. She's there now."

"In that ould cabin of his?"

"Yes."

Larry rubbed his chin. Then he made marks on the top of the badger's house with his thumb-nail. He was deep in thought.

"You see," said he at last, "she's a geril. They're afraid of you havin' truck with her because she's a geril. If they can't get you away from here, they'll get her. This chap, as like as not, has come spottin' and spyin' to get her away. Your ould uncle wouldn't be botherin' about her if she wasn't a geril—that's the bull's eye of the whole bisness—she's a geril."

"Well, what am I to do?" asked Pat.

"You see," said Mr. Fagan, "you've took her away from them people. Somehow or 'nuther when you told me first it came in me head there'd be trouble. I said to meself, that's all right, but how about them people; it's not as if they'd chucked her out, she's strayed from them—same as if a man had lost a cow, he doesn't sit down and say nothin'; there'll be a helebaloo goin' on in London over that geril. Now what way was it that the ould chap got to hear of it? Did they come afther her to his place?"

"I don't know," said Pat.

"It's maybe he's keepin' it dark from them since they haven't been down thimselves—there's no knowin', but if you're wantin' to stop them liftin' the geril, get her off somewhere else, she can't stick at Daddy's widout bein' found out or drowned out if there's a change in the weather."

"I don't know where to take her to," said Pat.

"Faith and I'm as blind as yourself on that matter: unless you took her to church."

"What the devil would be the good of taking her to church?"

"To marry her, but sure that's only my joke; well l'ave it to me and I'll think it over, there's only me cousin Jane livin' in Athy and me brother up North in Scotland that I know of outside the walls of here. They'd take her along, but they'd want pay to keep her. L'ave it to me—l'ave it to me and maybe I'll be findin' somethin' else. How much money have you?"

Pat told.

"Now off wid you," said Mr. Fagan, "for I have me stalls to atind to—I'll turn it over in me mind."

Pat went back to the house in a thoughtful mood. He never did much thinking, but when he did the product of thought was always vigorous and generally original.

Lord Trevessa had changed his mind and was leaving by the 8.30 from Mamsbury instead of the 10, and as Pat came round by the drive eight was striking from the tower clock

and the hired taxi was departing with his lordship. There was no sign of Chiles anywhere.

At breakfast Mr. Adams said nothing on the great subject but he seemed disturbed in mind. Pat knew that he knew. Mrs. Pounce, whom he had met as he was coming in to breakfast, had said nothing, but she, too, was not quite the same, she looked just as she had looked on the morning her sister had been " taken worse." Roberts, the footman, who waited at table, looked different as though thinking about something for once in his life.

To Pat the whole of Compton seemed silent, watchful, antagonistic; even the rooks, heard through the half-open window, seemed in the conspiracy against him and Eileen.

It amounted to that now in his mind. Eileen and he had become locked together. He had kissed her in London almost before he had spoken to her, but that act had brought nothing in its train.

Would perhaps have signified nothing if they had only left him alone.

No. Just because she was a "geril" they, after the manner of grown-ups who are always fussing and bothering about sexual matters, had stepped in to interfere. The unclean grown-ups, who have no idea how clean are the minds of healthy young people leading a healthy life, had chosen to put a clumsy hand to the business.

Larry had acted like a lanthorn on top of Mrs. Duff's rushlight.

Yes. They were going to take Eileen away from him. Eileen who had suddenly become for him the putter-away of childish things.

Eileen whom he loved!

He never said the word "love" to himself, but that didn't matter.

All at once he was a lover, burning—and aching at the thought of separation from his inamorata.

Love is an ache, an unhappiness, at best an uneasiness. People laugh at and speak lightly of it just as they do of

toothache or rheumatism, people who have forgotten their own sufferings.

At worst where Death or the World threaten to tear the lovers apart it is a hell.

Shutters, by a wonderful power of synthesis, had brought together in Pat's mind every little detail that helped to spell Eileen.

The old feather in her hat, the little bunch of daisies, the forlorn little face, the incidents of that journey from town, the pleasant days when he would run in to Duffields to pull her out into the woods to see the tree where the young squirrels were to be found or the new punt on the Long Water—all completed by that sudden squeeze in the shack.

That squeeze which said, "No, they won't separate us."

Adams had set him a task, to write a short essay on the reign of King Henry the Eighth, and after breakfast, in the library, he had taken down Hume to mug the thing up when, book in hand, he paused, placed the book on the table and fetched down a volume of Chamber's Encyclopædia, Vol. VII. Malt to Pear.

"Unless you take her to church."

"To marry her, but sure, that's only my joke."

The insane words of Larry acting on the insane mind of Pat (love is insanity) had produced an insane idea.

He got into an armchair with the big book. Margarine—Marmalade—Marmontel—Marriage. Here it was:

"Denotes the union of man and woman in the legal relation of husband and wife, as the same may be defined by local law and custom."

"Males of fourteen and females of twelve, not subject to any physical or mental incapacity, are permitted to contract marriage." A spurt of laughter from Pat. Bert Stevens, the boot boy, was fourteen and a bit and old Horniblow's grand-daughter Mary Louisa Jane was just twelve. He knew for he had heard old H. telling Mrs. Pounce of the fact some time ago.

"Just gone twelve, Mrs. Pounce," as though she were a clock.

The idea of the marriage of Mary Louisa Jane Horniblow and Bert Stevens tickled Pat. All the same they could get married.

"But for the marriage of a minor, the consent of parents or guardians ought to be previously obtained. (See Infants)

Ought to be obtained. It didn't say "must."

There was a lot more, pages; he read right through and Adams looking in and seeing him so engaged nodded and withdrew. The boy was evidently making notes.

CHAPTER VII

NOW when Lord Trevessa had taken his departure to make a fool of himself at Compton, Chiles, that able and accomplished man, had sat down to do a bit of thinking.

Leaving aside his passion for affairs and his instincts as a ferret, Pat had got the better of him.

This " young devil " had decidedly got the better of him. He bore no malice, or only the malice of the balked hound. If he ever had possessed the power of admiration and it had not been destroyed by his service with the Aristocracy he would have admired Pat.

Pat had put him on his metal.

He brooded on the affair. Then he sent a 'phone message to the garage for Charlie, and Charlie arrived ; Mr. Chiles proceeded to re-pump him.

Up came Skrines again and all Skrines's affairs, *and* curious information and the names of people who could be called if necessary to give some curious information about Mr. Skrines's affairs.

Any bother from the Skrines could be easily countered, of that he was certain.

It was late that evening when the telegram came from Compton.

Chiles in answer to it arrived at eleven o'clock by car and the interview with his lordship took place just before his lordship's departure next morning and did not last for more than half an hour.

" Yes, your lordship. As you say it is the girl that we will have to deal with mostly and the simplest course is to send her back where she came from. I should not advise your

lordship to send her abroad. If your lordship will permit me to say so that would be, so to speak, giving the thing away. Our line, I think, is that Mr. Spence has acted foolishly but with no wrong intent, as I have no doubt is the case. Your lordship says there are stories as to the girl having been maltreated and beaten. I scarcely credit them. Simmins would have informed me on that matter. He told me everything he knew to the discredit of the Skrines." Mr. Chiles produced a small note-book. "I have enough here to convict the man of keeping an illicit betting establishment, carrying on the business in the street and being an intimate of criminals and a possible receiver of stolen goods. He is an out and out scamp, and the threat of turning the screw will keep him quiet. He will take the girl back without question.

"That having been done it remains to deal with Mr. Spence."

"Yes," said his lordship. He felt that Chiles had got now to the hub of the problem. "Yes."

"I think your lordship, that there will be no difficulty in that if you will allow me a free hand to use tact and, in short, what means I may think necessary to prevent any exposure.

"Mr. Spence can really do nothing once the girl is back in London. The Skrines will prevent him from seeing her, I will take care of that, and I believe here in Compton I will be able to prevent him from attempting to see her."

"I quite trust your discretion, Chiles," said his lordship, "and I leave the thing in your hands. I have also sent for Miss Portman to come and stay. She will be here this afternoon and Mrs. Pounce will explain the whole position to her."

Chiles did not exhibit any delight at this information, but he did not show his inner feelings. It *is* so annoying when you are a capable man preparing to do a job to have an assistant forced on you to share the credit for success but none of the blame for failure.

However he said nothing.

He acted.

No sooner had his lordship departed than our gentleman slipped out and leaving Compton by the gates took the road, by direction of the Lodge Keeper, for Duffield's farm. He was dressed for the street and he had with him the inevitable folded umbrella. It was part of his personality, like his small whiskers and part of his dignity.

Mrs. Duffield was making bread, and the tins of dough were only wanting introduction to the oven.

It was always a ticklish time with her.

She kept the purse of the household. Scunner, an exceedingly wise man, showed his wisdom to its best advantage by making his wife his purse.

The bother was that the purse would not always open when wanted.

He was seated in the kitchen ostensibly mending a cart whip, in reality waiting for a favourable opportunity to extract two pounds ten, a sum required for personal purposes.

A step sounded on the walk outside and a knock came to the door which was a few inches open.

"Come in," cried Mrs. Duff, and in came Chiles removing his hat as he came.

"I believe this is Mr. Duffield's."

"I'm him," said Scunner.

He had never seen Chiles before and could not place him.

"Oh, indeed," said Chiles.

He turned and closed the door. It was almost as if he were taking possession of the place. He placed the umbrella under his arm and holding his hat in the hand of the same limb he stood to address his audience.

"I must warn you," said Mr. Chiles, "that anything you may say may possibly be used to your disadvantage—as a formality I just give you that warning and having given it, I proceed."

Scunner's heart flew up in his throat. Here was a 'tec sure—Law, anyway!

Chiles like the cunning brute he was, had sounded something that seemed like, but which wasn't, the trumpet of the Law.

Mrs. Duff, who knew less about such matters, stood looking at Chiles, frankly astonished.

"I beg your pardin," said Mrs. Duff, "but what are you talkin' about?"

"I presume you are Mrs. Duffield."

"Yes, I'm Mrs. Duffield."

"Then the warning applies to you as well. I have come in quest of the young girl you are harbouring unlawfully."

"What's he talkin' about?" asked Mrs. Duff of Scunner.

"I don't know," said the unhappy Scunner.

Scunner was the bravest man on the estate, but he was a coward where the Law was concerned. Not the petty Law that ruled over the rightful ownership of rabbits and fish, but the other thing; always secretly uneasy lest they should be had over the Eileen business he was now seriously alarmed.

This chap evidently meant business. He saw that his wife was taking a line of her own and he was quite content to let her do the fighting.

"What you talkin' about harbourin'?" asked Mrs. D. turning on Chiles. "Whach you mean walkin' into my kitchen and shuttin' the door behind you and standin' there with your hat in your hand and your 'brella under your arm talkin' to me about harbourin' gels—what gel?"

"I said a girl—if you will kindly——"

"Unlawfully harbourin'. Them were your words. Comin' into a decent married woman's kitchen——"

"Maria," cut in Scunner.

"You hold your tongue—takin' sides with him—let me speak. Now, come, what's your business and be done with it. Is it young Eileen you're after?"

"That's the name of the girl," said Chiles.

"Have you come from them Skrines?"

"You never mind where I've come from." Mr. Chiles's temper wonderfully under control as it might be, was moving to get loose.

Then he committed the unforgivable, spoke over her shoulder at Scunner:

"Shall we go outside and discuss this matter?" said Chiles to Scunner.

"Not if you please; we'll talk of it here," said Mrs. Duff.

Her calmness frightened Scunner. He was already frightened but this was an inlay as of pale upon red gold. He knew her and knew exactly how she felt at being ignored.

"You've no call to go into the backyard to say what you can say here," said Mrs. Duff. "I know you, you and your umbrella, it's the likes of you that keeps the likes of me busy puttin' chains on the doors. You've come from them Skrines. I know you. Well, you can tell them that sent you she's gone—pore lamb."

"I just wish to say," put in Chiles, "that if she has gone from here that fact does not, unfortunately, make you any the less accountable for her."

"Oh, don't it, that's a pity," said Mrs. Duff.

"Perhaps," said Chiles, "but the fact remains, and if she has gone from here, as you say, I must ask you to state where she has gone to. I have had enough of this talk," waxed Chiles, "and will have no more of it. You have both laid yourselves open to a criminal indictment, received a girl abducted from her employers, hidden her and harboured her for which the penalty before the Assizes is imprisonment. Come, no more talk, unless you wish to put yourself and your husband in a very unpleasant position; state at once where this girl has gone to—failing that, produce her. I believe your story is an untruth."

That was how, strong in his position, Chiles throwing away finesse tackled Mrs. Duff. In knocking a limpet off a rock, the blow must be sharp and swift.

Now Mrs. Duffield was an artist who loved her art productions even after they were created, her jams and pickles and chutney (made from ginger and vegetable marrows), her rhubarb and parsnip wine and her sloe gin, but her feeling towards her bread was more akin to reverence. It was inherited. Her bread was the corner stone of everything, it was almost the house itself. But just as the female animal in certain crises of mind devours her chief possession—to wit, her young—so the female human in certain conditions of mind has been known to go back on her most cherished articles of faith and reverence.

"You stand there and tell me I'm a liar," said Mrs. Duff, drawing slightly back and taking in her breath.

"That's about it," said Chiles. "Spoff!" she had clapped a round four pound tin of dough on his head and was holding it there pressing it down and screaming. It just fitted. The expressed dough ran all down his face blinding and half smothering him, he threw out his arms and was caught by Scunner who, springing to the rescue, released him.

"Called me a liar! Called me a liar! Called me a liar! Called me a liar in me own kitchin!"

"Shut up, shut up," cried Scunner. "Come along, come along into the backyard; I'll clean it off you."

"Liar!—I'll bang it on his head again——"

"Get back," cried Scunner, feinting with his heel at her as though she were a dog whilst he led and pushed the unfortunate through the back kitchen into the backyard. "Get back, you've done enough. Come on, here's the horse trough and the tap—I'll get it off you."

The hat and umbrella were shot into the yard and the back door shut and bolted from the inside.

"Come on—stick your head here," said Scunner. "Don't be mindin' her, it's only her ways. Here's a bucket of water. Hold your head down. I can't get the damn thing off you, but it'll come when I get the stuff off, rub your mouth first."

"Pff—police," spluttered Chiles, "send for the pff—*mind* you're pouring it down my neck. Police—I'll get you both six months for this—assault and——"

"Shut up," said Scunner, whose manhood had returned to him, led by his wife. "You called her a liar. Serve you damn well right, hold your head down or I'll go and leave you. Haven't no towel—wait till I get some straw—now then it's off your ears and you may thank your God she didn't smother you."

"Wish I had," came a voice from above.

Mrs. Duff having secured the doors—why, heaven only knows—had appeared at an upper window: "Wish I had—him and them that sent him."

"Now," said Scunner, disregarding his better half, "let's try and get that thing off you, bend down and hold on to the trough whiles I pull."

They got on opposite sides of the trough, the crowned one holding tight on whilst the other, his nails inserted at the edges of the tin pulled and worked without avail.

"It's stuck," said Scunner.

It certainly was. You cannot overcome the resistance of suction as a rule by pulling. The head of Chiles had driven nearly half the dough out of the tin and Adams, had he been there with paper and pencil, might have made a most interesting algebraical calculation as to the exact force necessary to overcome the atmospheric pressure to say nothing of the resistance offered by the packing of dough between the tin and the occipital and frontal bones.

There was one obvious thing to be done—make a hole in the tin so that the atmosphere might get in and lend a hand.

To this business Scunner now proceeded with the pick in his pocket knife, unassisted by the directions and misdirections of the lady at the window and her lamentations over the ruin of her tin.

CHAPTER VIII

AT eleven o'clock, Pat, unconscious of the doings at Duffields, had dropped his studies.

Even if the man who had arrived the night before were Chiles, there was no present danger to Eileen. She was safe at Daddy Ambrose's. All the same the idea of Chiles about the place so disturbed him that he had no heart to tackle Henry the Eighth.

He had honestly meant to please Adams, the dip into the Marriage Laws of England had been a passing abstraction. Hume before him he had plunged into an examination of the life and works of his Monk Hunting Majesty—but it was no use. Chiles was crawling across the page leaving notes of interrogation behind him.

Did I come last night ? Am I here ? What am I doing ? Is Eileen safe ?

Then Eileen's beautiful soft blue eyes met his gazing from memory-land—saying things. It was only lately that her eyes had begun to talk to him like that.

He left Hume open on the table and came out. He felt naturally enough that if Chiles had come to Compton, he had not come for his health. Shutters had said something about " restriction." If that meant Chiles it meant that Chiles would be put on to follow him, same as in London.

Outside in front of the house Pat looked around him. No one. He went across the grass to the bridge of the little river and stood on the bridge looking up and down stream and to right and left. No one.

The grand old house stood bathed in the morning sunlight. A gleam of white pigeons showed in the blue sky above the pigeon lofts, the rooks in the lofty elms sent their voices on the warm west wind—nothing more.

Pat leaving the bridge crossed the park and found the trees.

Here running by a path that skirted the Long Water he came through the nut grove, past the nut grove lay the fir plantation, in a clearing of which Mr. Ambrose's dwelling was fixed.

The sun shone full on the grass half smothered with pine needles—Pat checked for a moment and drew back.

Eileen was alone.

Alone and seated near the house whilst around her three squirrels were playing in the sun. They were Mr. Ambrose's squirrels. They often played on his roof, the roof that had no chimney.

Coming on this house by stealth you would often find the strangest visitors, two old rooks—the wariest of all birds—sure of bits and scraps in the morning, rabbits, a hedgehog, that lived at the back of the premises—things that seemed to come for company as well as food—sure of safety, like Eileen.

She was, in fact, one of the creatures who dreaded Man in his low-down and cruel form. One might have fancied her drawn there by instinct like the humbler beings of the woods.

She was in a simple brown dress devised, meditated over and paid for by Mrs. Duff.

To that excellent lady the girl had become a daughter as Chiles, at that moment being tugged free of his tin by Scunner, could have testified.

Eileen also wore a simple little straw hat. She was wearing it in her lap just now and the sunlight was resting lovingly in her hair.

Whatever Pat had done he had certainly brought colour and life to Eileen.

Her very hair was different, brighter and browner and more wavy, her little face had lost the peeky pale-about-the-mouth look and formed a less startling setting for her lovely eyes. Forgotten for a moment was all fear of the

Skrines. Her lips were parted in a smile. She was watching the squirrels.

"Eileen!" cried Pat, suddenly running forward.

The squirrels bolted, the old hedgehog who was putting a nose round the corner of the house turned into a spiky ball and Eileen sprang to her feet.

Pat ran to her and put his arms round her and kissed her on the mouth. The male rook who had stuffed himself with Daddy Ambrose's bread and who was digesting his breakfast was the only person to see, possibly it reminded him of his own courting days and the wife whom he had married four years ago and who was off now shopping by Fenbury marsh. He clung to his branch undisturbed and the branch swayed in the wind and the wind stirred the firs and touched Eileen's brown hair as she sat, now, with her companion in front of her, he sitting tailor fashion and tossing and catching a fir cone he had picked from the ground.

"Where's Daddy?" asked Pat, after they had talked a moment.

"He's gone, he said, to look after things," replied Eileen. "I don't know what he meant, but he said he wouldn't be long."

"Has Mother Duff been?"

"Yes, she came last night and brought me another blanket and things and said I was to come back to them soon and wasn't to be frightened. I'm not."

"You don't bother about *them*," said Pat, suddenly and ferociously. "If they try any of their dodges I'll take you away somewhere same as I did before; you're mine now—aren't you?"

"Yes," said Eileen hesitatingly.

"You'd come with me anywhere?"

"Yes."

Yes, oh yes, beyond the wood and the edge of the world she would have gone with him, without question or thought of greater happiness than to be with him always.

But she could not say all that; she could only look up at

him with those soft violet eyes. They were not tongue-tied, and what they said went deeper than words could have gone. They said enough to bring Pat to his knees and then pivoting round till he was seated beside her, his arm round her waist and their lips glued together.

Then, after they had nearly kissed each other blind and silly he drew a bit away from her. It was as though the things that were trying to separate them had got a wedge in between them. But it did not separate them far.

"I'm going to marry you," said Pat. "They won't be able to do anything then—will you?"

Eileen nodded.

She knew little enough about the holy state of matrimony, and what she did know as represented by the Skrines household was not alluring, but if Pat had proposed jumping over a precipice she would have nodded just the same. More, she would have followed him.

"I was talking to Larry," said this original lover, "he's the groom. Before the pater died he used to look after all the horses. He's Irish. He told me if I took you to church nobody could take you away from here and I asked him what the dev—I mean I asked him what he meant and he said if I was to marry you—that's what he meant—you see I didn't know anything about how it was to be done. I remember there was a wedding two years ago at Mamsbury the pater lugged me off to, it was one of the farmer's and she'd got a white thing all over her and flowers round her head." Pat broke into a spurt of laughter fancying Eileen like that and himself dressed like young Todmarsh. It was the marriage of Isaac Todmarsh of the Barrow Farm he was alluding to and Isaac not to mention pomatum had been dressed in a brand new frock coat by Mullins, not to mention lemon-coloured dogskin gloves.

"So," said Pat, "I looked what had to be done up in the 'Cyclopædia. There was no end of stuff about it. Do you know you can be married if you're over twelve—a girl can—Well, anyhow, I got all I wanted to know and I've

fixed up an idea. It's only come to me in the last few minutes. Things always come to me like that of a sudden."

This was the truth. Pat's mind seemed often to work unknown to himself as now.

He had read the encyclopædia on Marriage, he had shut up the book and taken up Hume. Then the encyclopædia forgotten he had thrown down Hume and run out and across the Park urged by the wish to see if Eileen were all right, he had found her, sat beside her, kissed her and not till then did his plan unfold and flower in his mind. It was a plan both cunning and complete; an ordinary sane, worldly-wise person taking the "social distinction" connoted by his marriage with a creature like Eileen into consideration would have said that the devil had put it into his head, but whoever or whatever put it into his head it was a plan for the marriage of himself with Eileen.

Pat knew little of life and cared nothing for the future; the people around him knew a good deal of life and always seemed thinking of the future—their mutual ideas about Eileen differed widely, yet who can say on which side sanity stood in a matter of this sort. One thing only was certain, determination though employed on both sides was better organised on the side of Pat.

The man who determines to do a thing is in a stronger position than the man who determines that the thing shall not be done.

Shutters and Co. had no idea at all of any danger of marriage between the pair, they dreaded "consequences." It was the thought of consequences that made all this fuss, first in the juicy impure mind of Amula Portman, then in the cut and dried mind of his lordship, not to mention the inferior minds ranged round the business.

They had determined that consequences should not occur.

Pat was now determining that, consequences or not, marriage should.

"Things always come to me like that, of a sudden," said Pat. "You see, there's no end of a bother if a chap wants

to get married before he's twenty-one. I won't be twenty-one for four years yet—at least three years and a bit, but we can't wait till then. You see, if I was to go to the old parson at Mamsbury and try to get him to marry us, he'd tell Shutters—that's my uncle—and the thing would be kiboshed ; you can get an archbishop to do it, but I don't know one, but there's another way I've found out only we'd have to do a bolt from here—we'll *have* to. You'll be ready, won't you, when I give you the word."

"Yes," said Eileen. "When will it be ? "

"I don't know—soon——"

"Does Mr. Ambrose know ? "

"No," said Pat. "I haven't told him—there's no use in bothering about *him*."

Somehow in the depths of his mind there was a feeling that Daddy Ambrose might not quite see eye to eye with him in this plan for the marriage of Eileen. In fact of all the grown-ups of his acquaintance, even to Scunner, he could not put his finger on one who would be *sure* to agree with him and back him.

—And Lord knows Daddy Ambrose was mad enough and unconventional enough—still—no, the grain of common sense that was always at the core of Pat's plans and which generally made them come out right in the end, was against Daddy.

"Keep the thing to yourself," it said, "don't let anyone else come fooling in."

"There's no use bothering about *him*," said Pat. "Nobody has anything to do with it but you and me, and when I tell you to come, you'll come—won't you ? "

"Yes," said Eileen. Then—"Will it be away from here ? "

"For a while," said Pat, "but this will be ours always. It's all mine now, but I can't do what I like till I'm twenty-one. For instance, there's a piece of land Scunner wants but the Agent won't give it to him and I can't—not till I'm twenty-one. I'll give it to him then, but Scun says he

may be dead by then—but that's not my look out. Now I must be going—I've got to get to the stables before luncheon time."

He kissed her and rising made off full of the new business in hand. Though it was based and centred on Eileen, it nearly made him forget her for the moment.

It was twenty past twelve by the turret clock when he reached the stable yard, shouting for Larry. But Larry was not there.

Pat not finding him, opened the door of the shed and began to inspect Jane. She wasn't looking any better in health since the last time he had taken her out. The fact of the matter was that since that journey to London and despite the noble work she had done, his treatment of her had not improved. Boys will be boys. You cannot expect forethought from them, nor gratitude—because they don't bother much about the past, and he never had fancied that all his plans might hang on Jane again.

And this time it was marriage.

She didn't suggest marriage as she stood there with her starboard mudguard buckled and a generally dejected look owing to neglect.

It didn't affect him, he knew her heart was good, but all the same he wished that he had been more careful during the past couple of months. And it was only three days ago he had buckled the mudguard in a collision with one of the farm carts. He had been turning a corner too rapidly. That was the fact of the matter. If some internal defect were to show itself at the critical moment it would be entirely his fault. The fact that the builders had built her so well that up to this and despite her age she had proved herself unbreakable was some comfort however.

He was pondering thus when into the stable yard came Larry.

"Oh, there you are," said Pat. "Where have you been?"

"Been!" said Larry, "been down to Duffield's to ask

him if he'd lend me a centre bit. Thinks I, I'll go down to Scunner and ax him for one seein' Horniblow or one of them other scamps has boned the one belongin' to the stable kit, and off I started, and who do you think I see goin' before me but that chap I tould you of this mornin'."

"Chiles."

"That's him. If you say that's the name of the chap that came last night, that's him, little side whiskers he's got and walks as if his boots was tight and carries an umbrella. Well, he was goin' before me and blest if he wasn't leadin' me all the way to Duffield's and when he got there, in he popped. 'He's after the geril,' says I to myself, 'and now we'll see the fun.' I come through the gate not makin' any noise and come close to the kitchen window which was a bit open and there I stood and waited and listened and I could hear Mrs. Duff and the chap logger-headin'—and then I heard Duff butt in and told to shut up and I had a peep and there was the chap standin' and all of a sudden—I must be tellin' you she was bakin' and the table was covered with the tins full of raw bread—Well, bejabers, all of a sudden she up with a tin of it and clapped it on his head screechin' like a hell-cat."

Pat burst into a shout of laughter.

"I never did see such a thing in all me life," said Mr. Fagan. "Clapped it on his head she did like a hat so that Scunner had the work and all gettin' it off him in the yard after she'd driven them both out of the house. Then when he'd got the chap free and the chap had gone off I looked in and took Scunner off down the lane for a walk to get him away from the missus and he says to me, 'Larry,' says he, 'we're done, the missus has done it,' says he. 'What between her and that blistered geril Eileen it's in the Assize Court we'll be at Winchester,' he says. 'I'm goin' to have no more to do with the business,' says he. 'I'll tell Master Pat I've chucked it. I'm not goin' to be hidin' this geril any more for no one,' he says, 'and you can tell him so,' says he."

"He didn't say that?" cried Pat.

"Yes, he did," said Larry. "The chap's got cold feet and no wonder. I'd have them meself if I'd got the hidin' of that geril on me mind and a wife like Mrs. Duff on top of all. Yes, you can't depend on him no more, and if I was you I wouldn't be tryin' to. You don't want to get yourself landed at the Assizes."

"Well, what the devil do you think I'm going to do? I don't want to depend on Scun but I never did think he'd have gone back on me like that—and what are you jawing about the Assizes for?"

"You drop her," said Larry, "that's me advice, pickin' up a geril is pickin' up trouble. I remember me old mother tellin' me that. 'Larry,' says she, 'pickin' up a——'"

"Oh, shut your head. I'll jolly well pick up something and bang you over your silly nut if you keep on pumping that slush. I'm going to marry her. You've got it now. You gave me the idea with your talk about taking her to church, and I've been going over it and fixed it all up and you've got to help."

"But, sure," said Larry, "if you take her to church you'll have half the parish there and maybe the ould gentleman standin' up to forbid the banns same as happened——"

"Oh, you owl—do you think I'm going to do it here?"

"Well, where are you goin' to do it?" asked Larry, scratching his head.

"You never mind. I'll tell you in time and you'll get the surprise of your life. You've got to help me, though. I'm not going to ask you to do much. You will, won't you?"

Even the curious mind of Larry that reeked little of social differences and less of the Law, boggled for a moment over this demand. The geril was a decent little thing, but then——

"Mind you," said he, "once you're married you're done for, you can't be carryin' on with other gerils and sure you're over-young to be——"

"Over grandmother—you will help, won't you? You won't have much to do but hold your tongue. How's the old Ford, does she want tinkering? I mean d'you think that last smash did her any harm?"

"Bejabers," said Larry, "it didn't do her any good. I'm not sayin' anythin's broke in her but a crack on the head doesn't do a chap any good and it's the same with her. Lavin' that alone the injin' isn't what it was, the injin's lost its spring. Sure, Masther Pat, why don't you get thim to get a decent new Ford for you instid of that blinkin' old rattletrap?"

"I have," said Pat, "I've been telling them all along and they won't. It's rotten, isn't it? It's my money and uncle sticks to it as if it was his own. Every blessed thing here is mine and it's the devil to get a cent out of them. Old Pounce is at the bottom of it all I believe. She writes letters to uncle and he keeps writing to her, and if I want money for anything, it's always, 'Oh what do you want money for?' Uncle's all right if they'd let him alone, he gave me a fiver when I was up in London, he's not half a bad sort really—if he wasn't such an ass."

"Well, I must be doin' me stables," said Larry, "and there's the clock gone one."

CHAPTER IX

PAT leaving the car to await a more detailed inspection came round to the house.

As he entered the great hall he saw something on one of the chairs, a woman's stumpy umbrella with an imitation Japanese ivory head.

Now where had that thing come from ? He went to wash his hands and coming back and opening the dining room door he found the answer to his question.

Amula Portman was taking her place at the table opposite Mr. Adams !

Miss Portman !

Pat knew at once.

Shutters had sent for her as an extra "restriction." First Chiles and now this ! Insult on injury. Leaving Shutters, leaving everything else aside he loathed Miss Portman physically and mentally.

Amula, at this period of her existence was a girl of some thirty-five years, looking—at her best—much younger. She was fresh-faced, rather inclined to the beefy type in face, plump, wide of hip, waggling in her walk and religious. Her eyes bulged slightly.

Pat at the sight of this apparition started back, he would have withdrawn only he was too far into the room.

"Good morning, Pat. Good afternoon I ought to have said—so you see I have come down again."

"Have you ?" said Pat, taking his chair, "how long are you staying ?"

"That depends," replied Miss Portman, helping herself to a fillet of fried sole.

The frank rudeness in Pat's manner and words pained

and astonished Mr. Adams, it did not disturb Miss Portman.

"That depends," said she helping herself to *sauce Tartare*, "on how we get on together."

She had put it badly. She meant to imply "I shall stay until you recover your reason and learn to behave like a *gentleman*, and until that little nurse girl is well out of your reach."

However Pat interpreted her well.

"Take that beastly stuff away," said he to the man with the *sauce Tartare*. "What has that fool of a cook been doing with these soles?" he inquired of the fellow with the fish, (it was Roberts) "shoving her fat head in the pan, looks like; they're all grease."

"Pat!" said Miss Portman.

"Who are you 'Patting'?" asked he. "Will you kindly mind your own business. You're not mistress here. I didn't invite you, and it seems to me it's my house." This before the servants!

"Patrick, Patrick," said Mr. Adams in a hurried low voice. He was horrified, shocked. Horrified at such rudeness to a woman before servants, shocked because his mild and clear mind seemed to sense the fact that Pat was not himself, that an insane spot in his brain had been reached and touched. That brain that sometimes saw things other people could not see had been stirred strangely by Amula.

He was going through a love crisis, his whole being was centred round Eileen, the woman instinct in him was fully awake and now this interloping lump of flesh had "butted in" to cut him off from Eileen.

The fact that she was a woman and such a woman made the interference ten-fold more of an outrage.

How he loathed her! Her great hips, her great legs, her—ugh!

Her lips! She had a sensuous mouth. Love! Lord love you no, love of food. He watched her eating.

His rudeness had made her snort, but she said nothing

and Pat relapsing into silence, the horrible meal went on.

Went on and was finished in silence save for an attempt at conversation between her and Mr. Adams.

After it was over, Adams made the boy a little friendly sign and Pat followed him into the study.

This had been the old Squire's study and justice room. His old books were still on the shelves and on the walls the same old prints that had always hung there and the last season's hunting fixtures.

The room had been given to Adams as his own work-room, Pat doing his "lessons" in the library.

"Pat," said Adams when he had shut the door, "I am very, very much grieved with you. You should not have spoken like that to Miss Portman. Remember she is a woman and also she was at your table. Pat, you have done what a gentleman ought not to have done and I am very much grieved with you."

Pat went red and then white about the mouth. He would much sooner have had a thrashing. He knew he had done wrong, yet he couldn't be sorry for it. That was strange. Always his hot-blooded but affectionate nature regretted wrong done and recognised as wrong, but he would not regret this caddish conduct of his. He *had* acted like a cad, but he couldn't feel regret.

"I'm sorry, sir," said Pat. He always "sirred" Adams on ceremonial occasions and in tense moments. "I'm sorry, sir, that I've done anything to hurt you, but she's—she's—she's—I can't stand her. She's a sneak! Oh, it's not that so much, but I can't stand her."

"But you need not be rude," said Adams.

Curiously enough the mathematician with his head always in a sky full of surds and quadratic equations felt towards Miss Portman—Well, what he felt wasn't a liking.

"You need not be rude, there is no use in this world, either, in people saying they 'can't stand' this and that sort

of thing, that is a sign of weakness. If we wish to be men we must learn to stand things. Pat, you are almost a young man but you were too young to take part in the Great War. There are lots of young men like you in England to-day who were saved from that trial. But the bread we put in our mouths to-day, Pat, was earned for us by young men who *had* to stand not only war but disease and cold and rain and misery and years of it. Many of them died, many were maimed body and mind, yet they all stuck it out. They did not say we ' can't stand ' this, or if they did it was only a grouse, anyhow they stood it or I would not be here to-day talking to you. Now Pat, you have got to stand Miss Portman. I mean to say you have got to be civil to her. Will you promise me ? "

" Yes sir," said Pat. " I know I acted like a bounder—but the funny thing is I can't feel sorry for it. Anyhow I'll be—I'll try and do nothing to—I mean I'll be civil all right."

" Pat," said Adams suddenly. " What is it about this girl ? "

It was the first time the matter was mentioned between them.

" You mean Eileen, sir ? "

" Yes."

" Well, you saw her, sir, yourself, that day we all had tea at Daddy's."

" I know," said Adams, " but I did not know that day all the circumstances, some of which have been told me by Lord Trevessa. For instance that you took her away from some people in London."

" Yes, sir, it was when you were on your holidays. I went up to stay with uncle and I met her "— He told about Charlie Simmins and the betting business and the whole affair.

Adams had seen Eileen so could complete the matter in his own mind.

Adams was quite useless as a man of affairs, far

more innocent than many a schoolgirl, yet he had a view of the broad facts of life more clear perhaps and certainly more clean than that obtained by the men of the world.

"I am going to tell you something," said he. "I told Lord Trevessa last night and I was going to have told you anyhow to-day. I have decided to accept a post at the Cape Observatory and——"

"You aren't going from here?" cut in Pat in sudden alarm.

"Yes. I cannot be at the Cape and here at the same time," said Adams with an attempt at lightness. "Yes, Pat. I am going. We have got on well together and though you haven't learned much still I believe you have lost nothing of that character which is yours and which if you will only preserve it, will be your best asset in life—for money counts for little. You are, and I know you to have been honest and chivalrous and a gentleman. I want you not to fall away from that. It's this way, Pat, about that girl. I think you did a fine thing taking her away from London only you spoiled it by deceit. You may say you had to use deceit—well, we will leave it at that. What I want to say is about the girl.

"No doubt you think your uncle hard and unreasoning in his wish for you not to have anything more to do with her, but you must remember she is a girl,"—here was Larry's philosophy over again, "and a young man can't go on taking a friendly interest in a girl without all sorts of trouble. Now as I am leaving you I want you to promise me not to do anything foolish. I am talking entirely for your own sake."

"I wish you weren't going, sir," said Pat. "I hate you going away from here and I'd jolly well do anything you asked me to do, but I'm not going to promise you things I'm not going to do. Did uncle say anything about her?"

"Yes, he did—a lot," replied Adams.

"Did he say what he was going to do?"

Adams hesitated.

"There you are, sir," said Pat, "he's going to do something to get her away from here without my knowing—that's what gets me. It's all underhand. Look at that beast—I mean look at Miss What's-her-name (Pat knew her name as well as his own but he couldn't pronounce it for loathing) coming down here. Sent by him. Look at that chap Chiles following me in London and then coming here—I'm sure it's him—all this going on against me and not a word said. They want to take her away. Do you know where they want to take her to, sir?"

"Pat, all this puts me in a very difficult position."

"There you are," said Pat. "They *are* going to take her away or try to. Well, we'll see."

He hung heavy and sullen for a moment as though plunged in an ocean of gloomy thoughts thick as treacle.

Adams watched him.

It seemed to him that Pat had been undergoing before his eyes all sorts of transformations that he only visualised now.

It was like the chrysalis coming out of the cocoon and turning into a butterfly or moth.

Butterfly or moth, which was it to be?

Appalling question for all who have to deal with the young, appalling to think that the bright-looking intelligent boy before you may be a future statesman or a future felon with the determining influence still hidden, untouchable.

There was one thing that brought comfort to Adams. Pat had refused to promise not to act stupidly.

"A fine character—a fine character," said the mathematician to himself when the other went off. "As far as I can see—who knows that even if he were to feel an attachment for this girl, who knows if it would not be better not to balk it. Social difference! I don't think that matters if love is there, and if the girl is nice and all

right. For it is the girl that makes or mars nearly every marriage."

Now how did this blind mathematician know that?

Then he went back to his study and the contemplation of signs on a sheet of paper that looked like

$$x^2+2z+y^2+2x=y^2$$

CHAPTER X

NOTHING is more surprising than the power of the Press to lift the small and the inconspicuous into the view of all men and women; the exhibition may be momentary but its spacial makes up for its time significance.

There is one condition only—the thing exhibited must tell a story.

Eileen going out for a bottle of beer and being run over by an omnibus would have filled two lines or maybe three of the daily papers. Eileen going out for a bottle of beer and never coming back filled columns of the baser press and had quite large notices in the upper journals.

It was the non-return of the wanderer that made the "story." What had become of her? And the bottle of beer, what had become of it? Was there any connexion between the two? Had she been waylaid and kidnapped or was it only another instance of the tricks and perversity of young girlhood? These and a hundred other questions appealed to the popular mind for solution and helped in the publicity.

Eileen Williams was advertised like a new brand of cigarettes or a new form of soap and the advertisements reached the Colonies, India and the further East.

And they hit a gentleman in a bar. At the long bar of the club in Singapore they hit Sir Arthur Williams.

He was a tall man, brown as a berry and with a nose like the beak of an eagle. He was dressed in yellow tussore silk and his cuff-links were pearls.

He was one of the Buccaneers.

They are not dead by any means and though they con-

duct their operations with letters of credit and bills of exchange they are not a bit less formidable in their way than Morgan and Kidd, though less bloody, certainly.

Williams had been knighted for a war service that had landed ever so many spies into the net of the Allies and also for his wealth accumulated in a few short years and magnified by rumour into twice its natural proportions.

Still he was very wealthy and no miser, a good sort enough for a buccaneer, but a terrible man to fall foul of. Away behind his good qualities and present prosperity lay something that poisoned his good humour at times, something that nobody knew anything of but himself—the days of his poverty.

Fierce, restive, direct and powerful-willed he was of all men the least calculated to succeed in England where obsequiousness and respect for the Law are amongst the necessities for advancement.

He didn't. He failed and failed. He married in face of Disaster and Disaster hit him twice as hard for his slight to her and not only hit him, she took him by the shoulders and pushed him and kept him down ; not on his knees, only on one knee. He refused to prostrate himself before her.

He kept his end up by doing odd jobs. He and his wife shared two rooms on the Moscow Road, which is in Bayswater, and Williams the prospective knight and millionaire did odd jobs.

He could turn his hand to anything.

The bother was that this splendid facility so useful in the Colonies is not so useful in England. England is a country where every man is expected this day to do his own job.

If a stockbroker is an amateur carpenter it is just as well for him to hide the fact, it won't bring him any credit, and so with other professions and trades.

Williams, driven to his last resources, found little he could do. He struggled along and a child was born to them, a girl whom they christened Eileen, and a few months

after the child's birth as though the stork had brought good luck with it, Williams found a job.

But it was not in England. It was in Hades or as near as you can go without breaking down the partition. It was in Mabonga in the West Coast hinterland and as no woman could go with him, Mrs. Williams and the child had to stay behind.

He held the job for a year, sending home money every four months, and then he fell to the fever and the drink and the devils of the coast. The West Coast is haunted by the original devils of the land and the ghosts of the men they have helped to destroy.

Williams lost his job and came down to Matanga where the sixty mile breakers fell on the sixty mile beach as they fell when Pharaoh was king, as they fell before the dynasties were dreamed of.

Sixty miles of beach, only a part of the thousand miles of sunshine, fever and thunder that is the West African Coast.

Here the ships hang off shore and the boats manned by kroomen bring white men ashore to trade and drink and die, and missionaries to teach the savages how to become civilised.

Here Williams might have taken the last downward step and married a native woman, but he was saved by MacFarlane, the chief engineer of the *Tagus*, a tramp bound for Cape Town, who took him on board as greaser. "Save you from worse," said MacFarlane.

Now a curious thing in life is that a man is sometimes destined to do another man a good turn as a prelude to heaping him with a load of benefits. MacFarlane took Williams away from the coast, and at Cape Town he made him known to a man who might be useful and give him a job.

This man was Langton, the surveyor, and Langton took Williams along in an expedition that proved the value of the present Peak timber property.

It was a small beginning but the results were rapid and astonishing. Williams went forward and every few months he sent a remittance home to his wife.

He was thinking of sending for her to bring the child out to Cape Town when he received a letter from her telling him that she had become attached to someone else.

Williams could not understand this letter at all, it was like reading Greek. He had always believed in her as he believed in himself, and now she had deserted him. Gone off with the child.

She was definite about that, she could not live without the child, it was nothing to him—so she said—as he had only seen it for a few months, but it was everything to her.

She gave no details of her new life and Williams crushing the letter into a ball, flung it from him into the street. It was outside the Cape Town Post Office that he read the thing, and it was outside the Cape Town Post Office that his life seemed suddenly turned on a pivot and all his views were changed. Well, that was Woman, a creature that would live with you and starve with you and—left alone for a moment, leave you.

He was absolutely unjust. He did not know the facts—the struggle against loneliness and poverty and hopelessness and the temptation to make another home for the child's sake. He read the situation from the face of it and turning on his heel he dismissed the woman and child from his mind—or fancied that he did.

As a matter of fact during the fourteen years of prosperity following that day the woman and the child remained in the background of his mind. Women and children tend to become fixed ideas even when they are dismissed or when they have dismissed you, and fixed ideas tend to grow. Away in the back of Williams's mind the woman and the child that had been his remained in darkness rarely referred to, yet alive.

And now to-day sixteen years and two months after

the last sight of them, here in a London newspaper he came on the name Eileen Williams.

He read the whole paragraph carefully.

Pat that night when he was pushing Eileen into the car in Peter Street little thought that he was pushing her on to a pedestal so high and so lime-lit that people would be able to see her even in Singapore, yet so it was.

Williams read how the girl had gone into the street and vanished, thus setting to the Police and Public the problem what had become of her. It was as interesting almost as a crossword puzzle.

The girl had gone out, reached the Rose Inn a few hundred yards away, had waited some few minutes for the bottle she was sent for, and according to the landlady she had left the Rose alone. It was then on the short journey home that she had vanished as though Peter Street had opened and swallowed her.

Eileen Williams.

It gave particulars about her which indicated nothing only the age. Seventeen years. That would be Eileen's age—but this girl was a nursemaid. Well, who could tell what vicissitudes the mother might have gone through since taking up with the other man ?

He folded the paper and put it in his pocket and turned to talk to a business friend who had come into the bar. He was going to England that week and it came into his mind that when in London he would investigate this business and try and see what was in it. He did not in the least believe that this was the child, it was just a coincidence, one of those things that are always happening—and yet it kept with him on the voyage home and came upon him in the most unexpected moments, the idea of this girl who might be his daughter.

Two days after reaching London and after he had seen his agents in the city he got in touch with the police who at once gave him Skrines's address.

Arrived at Peter Street he found Mrs. Skrines.

The unfortunate Skrines who loathed the police and all their ways had been brought practically nose to nose with the Force over the Eileen business. Policemen calling with photographs of girls, policemen calling on one pretext or another were not welcome visitors to a house engaged in hiding the activities of a small but viable illicit betting business.

Mrs. Skrines, opening the door to Sir Arthur Williams, fancied herself for a second face to face with another of the tribe in plain clothes, but only for a moment.

His card and his title and his manner dispelled the illusion, and he was shown into the awful little stuffy front sitting-room and given a dusted horsehair-seated chair.

"I have called about this young girl," said the visitor producing the cutting from the *Daily Post*. "I fancied it might be possible she was a relation of mine. Let me say at once that I shall be willing to compensate you for any trouble you may have in this business and for your time which I am taking up. First, then, will you tell me how she came to be living with you in the capacity of a servant?"

"A nussery governess," corrected Mrs. Skrines.

Then she told how six years ago, Eileen, whose mother was dead, had been living with a Mr. Matthews and Mr. M. going to Canada to take up residence with a son had secured for Eileen the post as 'tween maid at the Skrines. What she was between was left unsaid, but it would seem that in the interval of her schooling—sharply looked after by Board School officials—the child had done little jobs—made herself useful. Then she had developed into a nursery governess.

"Just so," said Williams, "but the point is, I want to identify her if possible. Have you any letters, any things of hers that might help?"

Mrs. Skrines had no letters, but Eileen when she vanished had left behind her a few things. She went upstairs and returned with them. Some dresses, a few old books, the

pathetic little bead bag still unfinished, and a tiny heart-shaped locket contained in a shell box. It was made of cheap gold and crusted on one side with turquoises.

Williams recognised it at once. It was a present he had made to his wife.

He had bought it for eighteen and six at a jeweller's in Westbourne Grove.

Heavens! how it all came back to him!

And now the wife dead and the child gone, who could tell where?

He sat for a moment with the thing in his hand and the woman stood looking at him.

"That girl was my daughter," said he at last. "I cannot tell you of all the things that happened to put her in that position. I separated from my wife. It was many years ago and I was in the East. Well—there, there—it is no use in going over old matters that can't be righted. And now she is gone, who knows where in this wilderness of a London——!"

He hung silent for a moment.

"Advertise—yes that is the only way—a poor chance that. The police seem a hopeless lot. Well, well, there is nothing more I can do here. My address is on that card. I am staying at the Savoy Hotel." He fumbled in his pocket and produced a five pound note. "Here is something for your trouble and, *mark you*, if you can by any exertion of your own bring me information that may lead me to her, I will pay you a hundred pounds. Any information that may put me on the track of her. *And* should I find her through such information, I will pay you five hundred pounds. Tell this to all your friends and to any police officer you know who has been engaged on the case, that is to say any local man for I have not much faith in Scotland Yard. You will never regret it if I find her."

He left Mrs. Skrines with the note clasped in her hand and her heart torn between desire and a feeling of hopelessness.

Five hundred pounds!

And Eileen the daughter of a Sir!

She felt as though she were living in a novelette.

When Skrines came home to dinner he found the meal not cooked and his lady above herself and smelling of gin.

She had cashed the note at the Rose to see if it were good and you can't cash a note at a tavern without buying something.

"Five hundred pounds!" said Skrines with four pounds ten of the residue of the note in his pocket. "Lord! If we only could find her. Nah, I don't want no dinner, I'll get a bite at the Rose."

CHAPTER XI

NOW whilst Pat was cheeking Miss Portman at luncheon, Chiles with the dough scraped off him was preparing to start to London to put Mr. Skrines on to the Duffields.

Incidentally, Scunner, alarmed to the limit, was crossing the Park in search of Pat. Scunner was wildly anxious to get out of this business, sure from what Chiles had said that a desperate revenge was in preparation.

He was not far wrong.

Chiles in the execution of his duties had never been assaulted before—and such an assault!

He could scarcely eat the luncheon that was prepared for him and laid in the Butler's room, he played with it whilst he read an A.B.C. Railway Guide.

"I must go up to town by the first train," said he to Mrs. Pounce, who came in to see how he was doing. "I see there is not one till three-fifty and that will not get me there till five-thirty. You have no car?"

"Only one, sir, and I believe it's out," replied the lady. "The Squire never did hold with motor cars."

"He seemed to have held with a great deal of rubbish all the same," said Chiles, "the way he has brought that boy up——"

"Excuse me," said Mrs. Pounce, bridling. "There's nothing wrong with Master Pat, if that's what you mean; and I'd rather not hear anything said against the Squire if *you* please."

Out she swept cameo brooch and all.

Disrespect for the old Squire was a species of blasphemy she could not stand even from his lordship's own man.

She did not even come to see Chiles off in the Mamsbury car that had been 'phoned for to take him to the station, and thus he knew that he had put his foot in it indeed. It was a most unlucky day for him. It came to him as he drove to the station that it might be as well to postpone operations till to-morrow or even—tell it not in Gath—sneak out of the affair on some pretext.

Pat was his unlucky number, he had lost twice over him and the third experience might be as bad as the others. But Mr. Chiles had a pride of his own that silenced these counsels of caution and commonsense and he drove to the station, caught his train and arrived in London at five-thirty-five. He drove at once to Buckley Square and by good or ill chance found that his lordship was at home.

"I interviewed the woman Duffield, my lord. They are hiding the girl—a rank bad lot I take them to be, both she and the man, and a very good business if they could be cleared out of the Compton neighbourhood."

His lordship concurred.

"I propose to try," said Chiles. "I have come to the conclusion that the only thing to be done is to call on the Skrines people, apprise them of the girl's whereabouts and leave them to deal with the Duffields. They are the parties responsible for the girl, it is their business to recover her, any third party like myself has no 'locus standing'."

"But that may involve scandal," objected his lordship.

"I think not, m'lord. In other hands it might, but I have the Skrines, as I told your lordship, muzzled and in harness. I can drive them where I will, seeing that a word from me in the ears of the C.I.D. might mean for them a heavy fine or even imprisonment. No, believe me, they will go down to Compton and deal effectually with the Duffields by threat of exposure. Even, my lord, if they were to prosecute the Duffields, Mr. Patrick Spence would, as a child under age, not be accountable or only slightly, and it might be made to appear, as I believe to be the case, that he was under the bad influence of the Duffields.

The whole thing would fall on the Duffields in a very unfortunate manner for them."

"I don't want even the chance of scandal," said his lordship.

"Well, my lord," bravely said Chiles, "neither do I, but in dealing with an abscess it is much better to open it and be done with it, else worse may occur. I believe Mr. Spence is attached to this girl to such an extent that there is no knowing what folly he may commit."

The scamp spoke the truth unconsciously.

"And more," he went on, "the thing may come out of its own accord—and that is always bad."

"I wish I had never accepted the guardianship of that boy," said Lord Trevessa. "Well—well—it's done and can't be helped. Perhaps you are right. I have great confidence in you, Chiles; do as you propose. But there is one thing I must make a *sine qua non*—my name must not be mixed up in this affair."

"You may be sure of that, m'lord, and may depend on my discretion."

He left the Presence filled with unholy joy. He had the instruments to work with and he was quite determined to make the Duffields pay to the last penny and suffer to the last possible limit. Mr. Chiles was a bad man to vex, a worse man to make an enemy of.

He saw clearly that the Skrines would not only recover Eileen but could and no doubt would squeeze the Duffields for compensation. Blackmail them, in fact, and not to put too fine a point on the matter.

They had received the girl. He would give them the points to work on.

He looked at his watch, it pointed to six-forty-five. Then, going to his room, he ordered tea to be brought up sharp and two boiled eggs.

That was all his lordship took before making a speech, something light and sustaining and as Chiles cracked his eggshells he turned over in his mind the whole position to

make sure there was no hold-back that might interfere with the cracking of the Duffields.

At ten minutes past seven he left the house and at the corner of the square called a taxi, got in and ordered the driver to take him to Peter Street, Bayswater.

Here at the corner of the street he dismissed the cab and, witless of danger as many a man who has walked light-heartedly into a staked elephant trap, came down the street, up the steps of No. 10, and rang the bell.

CHAPTER XII

THE Skrines were sitting after an early supper by the kitchen fire, Skrines smoking and going over a small account book and Mrs. Skrines darning a sock.

From the scullery where a small successor of Eileen was on duty came the sounds of washing up.

"Go careful with them cups, Matilda," cried the lady, without raising her eyes from her work, "and mind and don't be slushin' the floor. Lord, what's that?"

The hall door bell hanging in the passage outside had jangled.

"Go up and see," said Skrines, putting the account book in his pocket and some betting slips under the cocoanut matting by the fireplace. "I'm out if it isn't Joe Passmore."

Chiles, having rung the hall door bell, waited.

He was about to ring again when the door opened and Mrs. Skrines stood before him.

"Does Mr. Skrines live here?" asked Chiles.

"Yes, he lives here, but he's out," replied the lady.

"Indeed, that's unfortunate. Are you Mrs. Skrines?"

"Yes."

"Then I would like a word with you. It's on a matter of great importance."

"And what might that be?" asked she. "Might I ask your name?"

"Certainly. My name is Chiles, but I think, if you will permit me to say so that I had better speak with you inside. I cannot possibly talk on the door step."

She hesitated a second, then she let him in and lit the gas in the stuffy little sitting-room, with a match box taken from a shelf by the door.

"Take a seat, please," said Mrs. Skrines.

She did not shut the door completely, and she did not sit down. Stood waiting for him to speak.

"I have come," said Chiles, "about a young girl who was in your service some little time ago and who disappeared mysteriously."

Mrs. Skrines's heart sprang upwards towards her mouth.

"You mean young Eileen?" said she.

Before Chiles could answer the door opened and in walked Skrines.

He had come softly up the kitchen stairs and taken his place as a listener outside.

The fact that Mrs. Skrines had denied that he was in made no impression on the lady or on Chiles, their two minds being at such high tension.

"What does the gentleman want?" asked Skrines of his better half.

"He's come about the girl," said the other.

"Ho," said Skrines, "and what might you want to know about the girl, sir?"

"Nothing," replied Chiles, "I have only come to tell you that I know where she is."

Now to the Skrines hanging like moths between the flame of desire and the star of the £500 reward these words seemed too utterly good to be true.

First a gentleman calls offering the huge reward for information that will lead him to find his daughter, then a gentleman calls with the information cut and dried. It was too good to be true.

"I don't understand your meanin'," said Skrines. "Shut up, Martha, and let me talk to the gentleman. I say you come here tellin' us about this—what's your meanin'?"

"Good God," said Chiles, suddenly savage, "can't you understand English? I say that I know where this young girl is that left your house some time ago. Is that plain enough?"

It was. The manner of Chiles soothed by its brutality. This was no oily coppers' nark—here was possibly the chap who had helped to make off with Eileen.

"Yes," said Skrines, "that's plain, but may I ask your name and particulars?"

"My name is Henry Chiles, and the girl is safe at Compton Fleury, in Hampshire."

Skrines produced his pocket-book and a stump of pencil. His hand was shaking but he managed to write.

"Compton Fleury, near Mamsbury," dictated Chiles, "at the farm of a man named Duffield. Got that down? Well, now to come to business. You've got to go there and fetch that girl home and you've got to do it without making a fuss—all the same you've got to deal with the Duffields, and I'll tell you what you have to do with those people and if you don't obey my instructions I'll tell you what will happen——"

But Skrines had gone, he had rushed into the passage.

Then came his voice. "Where's that blistered hat?"

The sound of the hat taken from its peg.

He popped his head into the room.

"Keep him here till I fetch Williams," cried Skrines.

Then he vanished. The street door banged. Chiles seemed undisturbed.

"I was going to say that the instructions I am going to give you both have to be obeyed, simply because I know all about you and your husband and the business you have been carrying on and more than that, not only how you have been carrying on illicit betting on a large scale, but you have received—Well, I won't go into that, but the London Sessions would have a good deal to say to you both if you were in the dock. Perhaps you will communicate all this to your husband. I will call again to-morrow morning at ten o'clock and if necessary pay your fares to Mamsbury. I cannot possibly wait the return of your husband and his friend Williams."

"But, sir," cried the shattered Mrs. Skrines, "he ain't

a friend—he's the girl's father with five hundred pounds reward out for her, he's——"

"The girl's father!"

"Sir A'thur Williams, been here—" she went to a tea caddy, opened it and produced the card.

"Sir Arthur Williams." (Then in pencil) "Savoy Hotel," read Chiles.

"Been here, himself, huntin' for her—gave me his card. Five hundred pounds he's offerin'——"

"But what nonsense is this—Sir Arthur Williams—why the girl was a servant—a nursemaid——"

"I don't know," said the distracted woman. "I only know he's been here—she was lost at nurse or somethin' and he's come back from Africa or somewhere seein' the piece about her in the newspapers—offerin' five hundred to get her back, five hundred for the first news of her that'll get her back—and Skrines has gone to bring it to him."

Chiles sat without replying.

Here was a nice business. A father hunting after her, offering a big reward—a father that would become an outraged father when he heard the details. Pat would be dragged in as well as the Duffields. Lord Trevessa couldn't escape having his name implicated as the guardian of Pat, and he, Chiles, would be the target of his lordship's rage. Chiles wished sincerely that he had left the Skrines alone.

There was no getting out. Skrines had all the necessary information and had gone off to apprise the father and get the reward.

He had boasted that he had the Skrines muzzled and bridled—well, the muzzle had come off and the bridle too.

Why—why had he not begun at the other end, told these people that he knew all their mal-practices, threatened them—then Skrines would have been held.

Useless to ask that now, the situation had to be faced. It all depended on what sort of a man this Williams was. Could he be soothed, quieted, cajoled?

It was absolutely necessary to see Williams at once,

explain matters, lie if necessary, assure him that no harm had come to the girl, that the whole thing was an indiscretion on the part of the boy. Defend Pat. Defend the Duffields. Make them out as innocent worthy farming folk —that was bitter, but sweeter than the thought of the loss of his own position if Williams like Samson pulled down the pillars of the house of Duffield and his lordship's name were sullied by the dust and dirt of the ruins.

Williams, left to himself, would ten to one, call in the police—go right off to Scotland Yard!

He must see him at once, at any cost.

He rose from his chair.

"You ain't goin', sir!" cried Mrs. Skrines.

But he was gone.

CHAPTER XIII

HE found a taxi in the Queen's Road. It was a quarter to eight.

At four minutes to eight he drew into Savoy Court, dismissed his man and entered the hotel.

The first person he saw was Skrines. Skrines, hat in hand and seated on a bench in the hall.

He ignored Skrines and going to the clerk at the desk, found that Sir Arthur Williams was out but would return for dinner.

"I'll wait," said Chiles.

He had ignored Skrines, but Skrines did not ignore him. Skrines had come forth in a hurry. Roused to action just after supper and in deshabille he had not waited to brush his hair and put on a decent necktie. Chasing five hundred pounds he had not bothered to change his coat which was his house coat, his long-nosed, lined, crafty and not too clean face did not add to the dignity and respectability of his general make-up and the whole picture was not detracted from by the elegance of its environment.

Skrines rose up and came to the other.

"Did the wife tell you to foller me here?" asked Skrines.

"Yes," said Chiles, "she told me you had come here."

"Oh, she did, did she?"

"Yes, sit down."

Chiles took his seat on the bench and the other did likewise.—At all events he was less remarkable sitting than standing.

"Oh, she did, did she?" said Skrines, again, fiddling with his hat, "and off you put hearin' of the reward—now, I'll tell you——"

"Shut up and don't speak so loud, I don't want the reward, you can keep any money you get, but I've got to see Sir Arthur Williams first. There's more involved in this than you and your rotten five hundred pounds. You've got to take my orders, see, if you don't I'll put you and your wife in the dock. I know all about you and you can thank your friend Charlie Simmins and others for giving me the information."

Skrines shrank up. It came to him that he was in the presence of a high class crook, a master of the craft, who would gobble everything and who was out for big stakes in some game he could not understand.

"What's Charlie been sayin' of *me?*" he asked. "He don't know nothin' about me to my disadvantage. Look here, mister, what's the game? What you want to see the bloke first for? You can't claim no reward seein' it's us that got the information from you and I got here first whether or no and asked to see him first. Threatenin' me," went on Mr. Skrines, growing bolder with his own speech, "threatenin' me, and what about yourself, would you bear lookin' into? I don't know what game you're playin' in this but I do know you came to me with information about that girl; you're in the know of where she went to, how are you mixed up in it, that's what *I* want to know. Are you the chap that took her away? That's what I want to know. Put me in the dock, will you? Well, there's two to talk about that—seems to me I ought to be callin' for the police now instead of sittin' here beside you listenin' to you talk. Blackmailin' me. That's what it amounts to."

"Oh, shut up," said Chiles, "and don't be an ass."

There was something in his tone that told the other he was not afraid of the Law. Skrines hung silent and Chiles did the same.

It was a horrid position. He felt that the page boys and hotel porters were observing him and his companion and not favourably, yet he could not leave Skrines, he had to sit and bear it watching and waiting, waiting and watching

the out-going and in-coming guests—Americans with luggage, Americans in evening clothes, young men and women and—heavens!

Through the glass doors an apparition—Mrs. Skrines.

Hastily attired in a bonnet and an imitation fox-skin cape she had bundled out leaving the house in charge of Matilda, called a taxi and set off on the hunt after the others. Five hundred pounds, five hundred pounds, going, going and maybe gone, if she didn't catch up with Skrines and see that he got to Sir Arthur first. She hadn't the slightest doubt that Chiles had rushed off for the reward. It was her fault, it was her fault, she should not have told him of that precious reward—and she had given him the address!

She had committed every possible blunder and the knowledge of that combined with the value of the prize that might be lost took from this little old hard-faced woman all fear, so that she would have entered Buckingham Palace—if admitted—with as little care as she entered now the Savoy.

She came in blind as a hornet, saw her help-mate and made for him.

"Have you seen him?" cried she.

"What you doin' here, what you foolin' about here for?" demanded Skrines, who had risen. "What you leave the house for?"

"What did I leave the house for? Askin' me that and you boltin' off and leavin' me alone."

"Me boltin' off and leavin' you alone—and you tellin' him all abaht it—what'd you want tellin' him where I was goin', what'd you want givin' the show away for?"

"Go on, go on and don't be talkin', *is* he here, where is he——?"

"Don't be talkin'!" cried Skrines. "You with your tongue hung in the middle and clappin' at both ends tellin' me not to be talkin', you givin' the show away to that chap! Where is he?"

The fight that was beginning to attract the attention of the hall loungers to say nothing of the porters ceased.

Whilst it was on, Chiles had noticed with a sweep of his eye a tall bronzed man who had entered, gone up to the desk evidently for his key and owing to a word from the clerk turned to look at him, Chiles.

He knew and went forward at once.

"Sir Arthur Williams, I believe," said Chiles.

Williams, who did not recognise the Skrines woman in her street get-up, heard what Chiles had to say.

"Come to my room," said he.

Arrived there Chiles remembered the two in the hall and sent a message down asking them to wait.

Then, when the door was shut he turned to the other.

"Well," asked Sir Arthur, "what is it? What is this news you have to tell me about my daughter?"

CHAPTER XIV

THERE are days that seem specially charged with drama as though from some storage battery whose positive and negative represent the power of the comic and the tragic muse.

On this day of September, Chiles had not only been doughed by Mrs. Duffield and gone to town to find himself confronted with Sir Arthur Williams, but also on this day Scunner Duffield had got cold feet.

That in itself was a dramatic happening leading to other dramatic happenings, for Scunner, up to this, had never swerved in his loyalty to Pat.

Not only had he given Pat his time and attention and incidentally a liberal education in fur and feather lore, but he had shielded him time and again from Mrs. Pounce and put himself and his missus in a false position over the Eileen business.

The business of the dough, however, had brought things to a conclusion.

Chiles, on departing, had let fall enough to frighten a braver man than Duffield.

Assault and battery, abduction of girls, assizes—Scunner crossed the Park and coming to the house by the back way sent a message to the object of his visit by one of the under servants.

"Tell him it's about the ferrets," said Scunner. "The two I'm keepin' for him and one of them's got black mange. Off with you."

The servant caught Pat who was just going out after his interview with Larry.

"No, it's not the ferrets," said Scunner, "it's somethin'

else. Come away a bit down the yard, it's about that girl. I've had hell to pay with a chap from London. We'll all be in the jug over it. She's got to go right out o' the place, she oughtn't never to have come—you oughtn't never to have brought her and now the missus has landed herself hittin' the chap on the head with a dough tin—she's got to go."

"She's going," said Pat.

"She's got to go right away."

"What d'you mean by right away?"

"I mean right off back to London."

"She's not going back to London."

"Then where's she goin' to?"

"You never mind," said Pat.

"She's got to go back to them people she was took from."

"She isn't."

"Then where's she goin' to?"

"You never mind," said Pat, "she isn't going to the Skrines. You leave her to me, and she's going quick enough if to-night's quick enough."

"Well," said Scunner scratching his head, "if you've got somewhere to send her I'm sayin' nothin' more."

"I was thinking of doing it to-morrow," said Pat, "but I'll just have to do it to-night, there's no knowing what may happen. Shall I tell you what I'm going to do?"

"I don't want to hear nothin'," cut in the other hurriedly, "I don't want to hear a word more than what I know, or be mixed up in it no more. But I'll ask you, if there's trouble, to make it clear that me and the missus has had no hand in it."

"Don't worry about that," said Pat, and Scunner went off eased in mind if not reassured.

Pat, left to himself, stood with his hands in his pockets watching the figure of the other vanishing amidst the potting sheds.

It had to be done to-night. Scunner had put the last touch to the matter.

Leaving Larry and Scunner and all the indications of suddenly organised hostility to him and Eileen aside, Pat had commonsense enough to know that his position was untenable unless by a miracle.

He couldn't keep constitutional authority at bay much longer. His very real love for Eileen had made him wise in its own way.

If he didn't nail Eileen now, he'd lose her for ever. They would get her away or get him away; they were making screened preparations for attack, the moving up of that heavy piece of artillery, Amula Portman, was indication enough without Chiles.

To-night was the night.

Not waiting to put on his hat he made off round by the front of the house and across the park to the fir patch where he found Daddy Ambrose.

Half an hour later he returned running. He was in search now of Larry.

Larry was the hub of his plan, as will later on be seen, and Pat having found him conducted him into the old coachman's room which was situated between the stable and the coachhouses.

This place perfumed with harness polish and the lingering scent of corn bins still possessed the rests for the vanished harness and in a corner a tandem and coach whip twin relics of a day when horses were horses and roads were roads.

A picture of Isonomy with Cannon up stared desolately at the dusty window beneath which stood a much-battered desk on four high legs, a desk that had once held "accounts," corn bills and so forth.

Pat shut the door of the coachman's room and a listener might have puzzled long over the scraps of conversation to be heard according as their voices were raised or lowered.

"*You* won't get it in the neck, it's me that'll get it if

anyone, but *I'm* not afraid, they're such a lot of fools they'll never nab me."

"But see here, Masther Pat——"

"Oh nonsense—wait here till I get the pen and ink and paper."

He dashed off, returning with the writing materials and on top of the old desk that had once held accounts and the bills of vanished corn chandlers, Larry with arms squared and tongue out began to scrawl a letter to Pat's dictation.

"And now," said he when Pat had it in his pocket, "I'll be tellin' you something if it's to-night you're runnin' off with her, go careful for fear of that divil—of a woman."

"That Portman beast?"

"That's the wan—she nearly got ould Carter the sack when the Squire was alive, always sniffin' and smellin' round she was and she's come here on the same game afther you. She was stuck talkin' to Mrs. Pounce afther luncheon and Milly the under-housemaid listened at the door and tould me it was all about you and the geril."

"I'll choke the beast," said Pat.

"Faith and a bit of chokin' wouldn't do her any harm—but I'm tellin' you. Milly the housemaid told me she heard her askin' Mrs. Pounce if you went out afther the girl at night. I said to Milly, 'Now there's a dirty trollop for you,' says I, 'talkin' about him and her like that and Eileen a little innocent thing,' says I, 'with no more harm in her than a kitten havin' her character trajuced,' says I, 'by this plum-faced ballyhoo from London.'"

"That's her," cried Pat. "Plum-faced ballyhoo—that's her. I wish she could hear you—I'll tell her if I get a chance."

"Well, you can tell her or not," said Mr. Fagan, "but there it is and if you're going to do anythin' to-night, I wouldn't be doin' it too early for fear she'd be up waitin' and watchin'——"

"Confound her," cried the other, "No matter, now I

know what to expect it'll be all right. *I'll* lay her out if she tries any of her tricks, and I don't intend to start from here till two in the morning. My, it will be a joke ! "

The idea of the new adventure was better than apples of gold. If by some inconceivable miracle Lord Trevessa had suddenly appeared at Compton as a friend of Eileen and blessing her acquaintanceship with his nephew, I doubt if Pat would have hallooed with joy.

Larry's pronouncement on the business given to Milly had, perhaps, a good deal of worldly sense in it.

" If they'd l'ave them alone," said Larry, " they'd be doin' better than tinkerin' afther them, but better than l'avin' them alone it'd be if they shoved her down his throat for then he'd be sick of her."

Instead of shoving her down his throat, they had converted her by a touch of a fairy wand, wielded by Stupidity, into the objective of a great Adventure.

Pat had taken her from London, a fairly difficult business carried out with success. The thing before him now was more difficult still. That was the charm of it.

He left the coachman's room with Larry and they went to the Ford's den.

" I think she'll stand it," said Pat as Larry flung the door open and the sunlight fell on Jane, " and if she breaks down, I've money enough to take tickets third class, I believe. Fortunate those two new tyres have come, stick 'em in—we've lots of petrol."

" Lashin's," replied the other, " there's twenty tins or more in the pethrol house."

" Shove as many tins in as she'll hold."

" Have you got the roads all right ? " asked the other.

" You bet," replied Pat. " I've worked it all out on the road map. There's nothing I haven't done, I believe, and if the old car doesn't break down—but she won't."

" There's no tellin'," said Larry.

Perhaps even in his lawless and free from care of consequence mind there was a feeling that it would be all the

better if she *did* break down, for he could not disguise from himself that there was " no tellin' " what would be the end of this business. But he said nothing. He had agreed to help and there was nothing to be said, and after all the " poor little geril " that everyone was down on, wasn't she as good or better than any other Masther Pat might meet up with ?

To Larry's honour be it said that he had seen and approved of Eileen, indeed she and her story had taken his heart.

He would never have helped had she been a " trollop."

All the same his mind was not free from vague misgivings, summarised in the words :

" There's no knowin'."

CHAPTER XV

PAT did not come to dinner that evening. He had made up his mind never to speak to Miss Portman again. He did not want to hurt Mr. Adams' feelings by turning up for the meal and being rude to the woman, so he just sent word that he didn't want dinner.

But he did not go hungry.

Half a raspberry jam tart, two cups of custard, half a small tongue to say nothing of bread and butter were laid in and as he finished his meal in the butler's pantry, the bright idea came to him to ask for sandwiches in case he should be hungry in the night.

Eileen would want something.

It was now a quarter past eight and as he crossed the hall to go upstairs he heard through the dining room door, left a tiny bit open, Miss Portman's voice evidently talking to Adams.

They were sitting at dessert.

He listened for a second.

"Yes, the Anglican Church," the woman was saying, "I quite agree with you as far as that goes, but when it comes to the Church of——" She was talking religion!

He came along upstairs, his bedroom was on the same corridor as hers and he had to pass her door to reach his own.

The thought came to him of whipping in and making her an apple-pie bed or stitching up her night-shirt, but he dismissed it.

This business was serious and one mustn't play about with it. In his room he shut the door and taking all the money from his pockets flung it on the bed. Then he counted it.

Daddy was to bring Eileen to the stable yard at two o'clock, at two o'clock—a little more than five hours hence—he was to start on this business with less than ten pounds in his pocket.—Yes, but he had Jane and petrol and two new tyres to say nothing of an extra new inner tube, also sandwiches if the cook didn't forget to send them up—

Ought he to have asked for those sandwiches? The thought came to him as he sat on the side of his bed playing with the money.

His appetite was known to the servants, all the same in all his years he had never asked for sandwiches "for fear he'd be hungry in the night."

It is true he hadn't turned up for dinner, all the same he hadn't done badly in the butler's pantry.

He felt that he had committed a mistake. If Julia had made friends with any of the servants they might bring her word of this laying in of provisions—but would she have been able to make friends? Help! He suddenly remembered that several of the old staff remained since the time of Amula's last visit. Leaving aside Mrs. Pounce, who was not exactly a servant, there was the butler, the cook and some of the women.

Well, the thing was done and could not be undone and even if Amula were to suspect anything, what could she do? She might hang about on the watch and give the alarm, it is true, but it wasn't likely she would hang about till two o'clock.

Pat congratulated himself on his cleverness in fixing the time so late or rather, so early. Then he recounted the money on the quilt and put it in his pocket.

There was nothing else to be done, but pack his suit-case. He had even thought of a cloak for Eileen in case she'd be cold, recapturing the fur-lined cloak that he had put back in the cedar room and storing it in the garage above the empty petrol tins.

There was nothing else to be done, except one thing.

He had to write to his uncle. To Pat's ingenuous mind

the step he was now about to take was of such a grave nature that it required a formal letter to his uncle.

A letter to be left behind.

He had brought up note paper and a pencil for this purpose and now turning on the electric light over the dressing table, he sat down and squared his arms and with a pencil began :

Dear Uncle,

I know what I am going to say will surprise you, but it can't be helped. I've come to love Eileen and I'm going to marry her. When you'll have got this, I'll have gone off with her to marry her. I found out all about it in the Cyclopædia so you will see I haven't done this without thinking about it. Anyone can get married if he's over fourteen and any girl if she's over twelve, but you can't get married in England without a lot of bother, but you *can* in Scotland. You have to live there for 21 days first and that's what we are going to do. I'm going to a friend in Scotland* but there's not a bit of use in trying to follow us as it's away on the moors. Eileen doesn't know anything about this and it's not her fault. I'll write at once when we are married.

Your afft nephew,

PATRICK SPENCE.

He read this through twice and then he folded it carefully and addressed it to Lord Trevessa and placed it on the dressing table.

The old suit-case he had taken to London was standing by the bed. He opened it and crammed in a few things and as he did so, it came to him that this business of the suit-case was the weak spot in his armour.

He had reckoned on slipping out with it and stowing it in the garage, the possibility of being seen by one of the

* Larry's brother one would imagine.

servants had not bothered him because it was not till just now that the possibility of the servants acting as spies for Miss Portman became apparent.

He strapped the thing and then sitting on the bed and kicking his heels, looked at it.

Then he opened the window and looked out.

Twenty feet below lay a flower bed. He brought the suit-case to the window, poised it and dropped it out. It fell with a muffled thud unheard and unnoticed by the world of Compton.

There it would lie safe enough till he picked it up.

What a splendid night. The constellations had just done sketching themselves in a cloudless sky, there would be a moon. The full-hearted warm west wind carrying the perfumes of Hampshire and a hint of the sea beyond stirred the trees by the pigeon lofts and brought with it a sound no louder than the sigh of a child in its sleep, yet the voice of mighty woods.

The woods where Tyrrel killed Rufus, whose acorns once held the fleet that broke Villeneuve.

And now a dog—no, a fox—far away off on the wind the bark of a fox.

Listening, the seemingly quiet night became starred with sounds. An owl passed above the pigeon lofts, flying on wings of velvet she came past the window.

Pat drew in and shut the casement. Then he looked at his watch, put out the electric light and lay down on his bed dressed as he was. He had no fear of not waking in time. He had an alarm clock in his brain that never failed him when cub-hunting or any early sport was on. He had to awake before two o'clock and he would do so.

As a matter of fact he awoke at one, verified the time and putting out the light lay down again, but not to sleep.

There was no use in kicking about in the stable yard for an hour, so he lay waiting and thinking and he might have dozed off for a moment only that a sudden remembrance fetched him up.

They had never brought him the sandwiches. He had clean forgotten about them before he went to sleep.

The cook must have forgotten about them—or—had they been countermanded ? Well there was no use in bothering —not a bit and it was about time to get up and be doing.

Stay !—What sound was that ? It was the sound of the door handle being turned ever so softly.

CHAPTER XVI

NOW Miss Portman, half informed, fully aware that *something* was up that night and alive in all her senses had, like Pat, not retired under the sheets.

He was going out after that girl; to leave the house she knew he would have to pass her bedroom door. She had him bottled if she only chose to wait and watch, and she chose. She did not mind any personal inconvenience in this work, no more than a fox hunter minds wet or a wolf hunter cold.

She was not a spy, pure and simple; espionage was an unpleasant but necessary part of her business—which was concerned with other people's morals. She was a hunter in fact whose game was the bagging of sinners, and to bag one, or thwart one, she would have put herself to any inconvenience.

So she sat up with a candle and a book and her door open. She did not put on the electric light and she shaded the candle in such a way that its light would not have been perceptible to a person coming along the passage, yet she had no fear of anyone going by unseen. That passage creaked.

Like most old houses Compton was full of creaks and you cannot disarm or mollify a creak by walking softly.

She knew all this and secure in the knowledge, she sat and read and listened and one o'clock struck, but nothing came, only mice in the wainscotting.

At ten minutes past the feeling came to her that she was wrong. If anything had been going to happen it would have happened by this.

At quarter past one she undressed and getting into bed

with a dressing gown handy lay still, reading and listening.

Time passed and she was on the point of putting out the light when the idea came to her—that boy, could he have left his room by the window ?

She remembered how he had plugged the weathercock of Mamsbury Church, an act of outdoor sacrilege for which the old Squire had never punished him—he could climb like a squirrel—*Why* had she not thought of this before ?

She left her bed, put on her dressing gown and softly left her room.

She knew Pat's door.

She did not know however the lie of the furniture in the room and opening the door almost without noise, she stood and listened.

Not a sound of breathing.

The bed in her room was on the right of the doorway and thinking that possibly the same arrangement might obtain here, she gently moved to the right with hand outspread. She wanted to pass her hand over the coverlet to make sure the bed was empty. Certain in her mind that it was, a little creak of the floor boarding scarcely disturbed her.

But for Pat who had heard the door open, it was the signal.

Pat had no fear of ghosts, he had seen them and knew all about them, his psychic understanding told him at once and definitely that this was neither ghost nor burglar, but Miss Portman. She had come stealing in to see if he were in bed.

Clearly as he had seen the Georgian gentlemen rioting in their banqueting room, and the archer of other days drawing his bow in the Ride, he knew that in the black darkness Amula was present.

He slipped from the bed almost touching her, made for the door, felt for the key in the lock, whipped it out and escaping from the room pulled the door to with a bang, hung on to the handle with his right hand and inserting the key with his left locked the door.

He put his ear to the door.

There were sounds from the room. A confused pushing about, a chair upset, no outcry.

The hunter taken in the trap evidently guessed the whole position, and that it wasn't a position to advertise to a sleeping household.

Then came the click of the electric light switch. She had evidently found it and turned on the light.

Then came a gentle knocking on the door panel, and a voice lowered a tone.

"*Pat*—are you there? Pat, this is stupid of you. Open at once, Pat. I only came to see if you were all right. Pat, do you *hear* me, open at once—at *once* I say. If you don't I will ring for help. Pat, I will say nothing about it at all if you will open—consider for a moment——"

But Pat had long left the door.

Mad with rage at the insult to his manhood he had reached Amula's open door, the candle was burning on the table by the bed and on the table lay a book "Missionary life in Manchuria."

He flung the book in his anger into a corner of the room and took the candle. It would save him from turning on the electrics in the passages as he had intended.

Pat was partly Irish, that is to say partly liable to make funny mistakes, he had thought out all his plan without even thinking of providing himself with an electric torch or a candle.

He had said to himself, "Oh, I'll turn on the electrics," without thinking that in his progress he couldn't turn them off again and that consequently he would have to leave behind him a house lit up.

She had saved him from this. He took the candle and the box of matches which was beside it. Then his eyes fell on her clothes. Her skirt and top thing and on a chair her undies, stockings, suspenders etcetera—Oh joy!

He made a bundle of all her clothes. In a big open suit-case he saw more things, more undies, etc. He added them

to the bundle leaving her not a rag to stand in. Then with the lighted candle in his hand he came down the passage.

He knew where to hide them till the crack of doom—a Priest's hole opening by a panel from the lower corridor.

"That will teach her," said Pat as he pulled the panel to.

Instinctively he knew that she daren't make a noise and rouse the house to find her in such a strange position, that she would wait for any chance to get quietly out—the servant maid with the tea in the morning or the chance of himself relenting, but true to his nature he had quite forgotten the marriage letter he had left on his table addressed to Lord Trevessa, a document that might, if found, nerve her to anything.

CHAPTER XVII

AMULA, receiving no answer to her muffled entreaties, drew a chair near the door and sat down.

What a position!

Ridicule and slander stood on either side of the chair whispering in her ear. At the best she would be the laughing stock of the house.

A spy caught in the act and imprisoned. Like Chiles she was beginning to wish that she had left Pat alone, but wishing does not alter matters already accomplished.

She curled her toes and listened.

He would surely come back. He would *have* to come back.

Splendid and nerving thought, he would have to come back. Even if he had gone out to see that girl—that hussy, he would have to come back before morning.

Possibly with the door between them he could make her promise to say nothing—but once let her escape and get back to her room—then he would see!

The bed had not been slept in, he had been fully dressed waiting to go out, that was evident—and she had caught him in time—at least he had caught her. Well, it didn't matter, at least it wouldn't matter once she was safe back in her room.

Feeling chilly she left the chair and began to walk about looking at things to pass the time.

Pat was everywhere. On a shelf where lay a catapult long discarded and a saloon pistol with boxes and boxes of ·22 cartridges.

On the walls were pictures, some evidently cut out of sporting papers by the hands of the boy and framed and glazed by the same, showed Sport.

"A good 'un to go." "Badger, the best of the Litter," and from the *Sketch* a girl in a bathing dress, at least in a foot and half of skin-tight stockinette, diving from a spring board.

Disgusting!

Then there were whips on a rack and a battered old hunting horn.

She came to the dressing table, looked at the brushes thereon and saw a folded note. It was directed in Pat's deplorable hand to Lord Trevessa.

Amula took it up. Then she unfolded it and read it.

Pat—Pat had run off—run off with that girl—run off with that awful girl—run off to get married to that awful girl!

And he had been here—here only a few minutes ago—half an hour ago—and he had escaped—he was running off with her now. She looked wildly round, saw the electric bell by the door, rushed to it and rang. Nothing mattered now. Nothing.

The letter covered everything. Found in his room she had come to prevent him from running away and he had locked her in by force—she rang and rang. Then she rushed to the window and flinging the curtains aside and flinging open the casement she tried to shout.

But a woman is no good at shouting, her voice was thin as a seagull's—she left the window and came back to the door and began to pound with her fists.

The drum-like echoes rolled away down the passage.

She listened.

Yes, doors were banging, voices, the house was rousing like a stirred hive.

She went on pounding.

"Hullo, hullo," came a voice. Then other voices. "Master Pat's room—Burglars—Tell 'e I saw 'un—Get the goon."

The key turned, the door opened and the butler in coat and trousers stood before Amula.

He had a poker in his hand and the passage was blazing with light and filled with lesser servants.

"He's run away," cried Amula. "Master Pat has pushed me into his room and locked the door on me and run away with a girl—stop him, quick! Where's Mrs. Pounce? Oh, Mrs. Pounce, it's the girl—quick, he's run away with her!"

Mrs. Pounce was sailing down the passage, aroused from sleep by sounds and outcries, her one idea was fire. She held an extinguisher which she nearly dropped as she heard Amula's pronouncement.

"Run away!" cried the good lady, "Master Pat—but where has he run to?"

"Scotland. He's run off to be married."

"Scotland."

"Yes."

"Married?"

"Yes."

"With *that* girl?"

"Yes."

Mrs. Pounce gave at the knees, lesser servants supported her on either side, her head went sideways.

"Lay her on the floor," commanded the butler.

But the good woman was not of the sort to yield to a blow like this involving the honour of the family.

"Let me be," she cried suddenly, finding voice and straightening herself. "James—run! Stop them! The Police! No, no, not the police in, not the police—the motor car. Call Larry Fagan. They'll have taken the north road. But how did they get away?"

A sudden outburst of blubbering came as a reply.

It was from Milly, the under-housemaid. Milly knew. Larry, to ease his conscience, had confided in her. She had carried the secret to bed with her and now awakened at two in the morning with the house in commotion and ablaze with light the thing was too much for her. She couldn't keep it in.

"If you're meaning the old Ford car, it's that they've

taken," blubbered Milly. "Never mind how I know I can't be telling you better than that. Master Pat's driving and Miss Eileen——"

"Don't dare to say that," cried Mrs. Pounce, "Miss Eileen, indeed!—James—James!"

"Oh, shut up," cried the butler suddenly and sharply. "You're goin' on like a lot of hens with the pip. Ford's gone, we've got to chase 'em, haven't a car. Ring up Mamsbury, George. Tell the Lion to send along their car—ain't much use in my opinion, they'll have got a long start. Well, well, well, well, well—Hey, what's that?"

From below stairs a sound had come, not loud, but startling as a trumpet blast.

The hall door bell was ringing.

"It's Master Pat come back," cried Mrs. Pounce.

But it wasn't. Pat and Eileen, to say nothing of Jane, were now on the road that leads to Winchester.

CHAPTER XVIII

SIR ARTHUR WILLIAMS who had closed the door of his sitting-room repeated the question.

"Well," said he, "what is this you have to tell me about my daughter?"

"First of all," said Chiles, "I don't know anything about your daughter, only about a young girl who was living with a man and his wife named Skrines at 10, Peter Street, Bayswater."

"That was my daughter."

"Oh," said Chiles, "that simplifies matters." He paused as though in hesitation.

As a matter of fact this tall, bronzed, eagle-nosed man from the other side of the world was not the sort of individual to deal casually with on any subject, let alone the subject of a lost daughter.

There was a severity and a potential ferocity in the face, make-up and general aura of this man most quelling to a light spirit or a spirit that would treat him lightly.

"Yes?" said Williams.

"I have come," said Chiles, "to tell you that this young girl is quite safe."

"Oh," said Williams. "Your name, please?"

"My name is Chiles."

"Yes. Excuse me, but you said the man and woman, Mr. and Mrs. Skrines, are downstairs. We will send for them." He touched a bell. "And whilst we are waiting perhaps you will be so good as to tell me your facts, just bare details. We will drop the word daughter please and use the word girl. Well, this girl who was with Mr. and Mrs. Skrines and who was kidnapped——"

"I wouldn't call it that," said Chiles.

"Oh? Excuse me. Please tell the hall porter that Sir Arthur Williams is now able to see the two people who called and who are waiting—name Skrines. I beg your pardon. You say you would not call it kidnapping? Well, let us hear what you would call it."

It came to Chiles that Sir Arthur looked upon him dubiously, regarded him either as a faker who carried false news or a man in the game who had come to blow on his fellows—or an emissary from a gang whose practice was the abduction of children and young girls to hold for ransom. This was a very unpleasant feeling.

"It's just this," said Chiles, "the whole fact of the matter is that a young man, a very foolish young man, imagining the girl was unhappy came up to town, at least managed to run away with her from these people, Skrines, and took her to the country where he placed her in charge of a most estimable farmer and his wife. She is there still—that is all there is to it."

"Yes," said Sir Arthur. "That sounds very well, doesn't it, but may I ask, where do you come in?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"Where do you come in? How are you mixed up in the business with this estimable young man?"

"I'm not at all mixed up in it," replied Chiles.

"Oh, aren't you? Excuse me, there is someone at the door. Oh, Mrs. Skrines, that your husband? Well, both take a seat for a moment. Shut the door, Skrines. Yes, take a seat. Well, sir, if you are not mixed up in it, may I ask what interest you have in it. Do you know Mr. and Mrs. Skrines?"

"Never seen him before in my life," cut in Skrines. "He came to our house smellin' about and askin' questions till he knew your address, but he brought the noos right enough and I took a cab to bring it to you, mister, and I was here first, mister, the hall porters will tell you that, a full ten minutes I was here waitin' for you seein' you were in late."

"Shut up," said Sir Arthur. "If there is any truth in this man's story, and I'm beginning to believe there is, you'll get your reward all right; but please keep your head closed while I'm talking. Now, sir, please answer, do you know Mr. and Mrs. Skrines?"

"I don't," said Chiles, "and what's more I don't want to."

Snorts from the couple suppressed by a wave of Williams' hand.

"Oh, you don't want to. Well, let me ask you a direct question. Why did you go to them to-night with news about this girl?"

"That's my affair," said Chiles. "What do you want with all these questions? I bring you news that your daughter is alive and well, that the whole thing was the work of a foolish young man about whom the less said the better as it never does any good raking up things, that the girl is quite unharmed. Is not that enough?

"She is down in Hampshire. I brought Mrs. Skrines the address so that she could go and fetch her, to tell you the truth," continued Chiles suddenly becoming confidential. "We are afraid of complications if she remains there, as this stupid young man is still in love with her."

"I see," said Williams.

He went to the telephone and rang up the hotel office.

"Will you put me on to Scotland Yard?" said he.

A chill ran up Chiles' back and down again—then it ran up again and got stuck.

"You don't believe me," said he. "Let's be clear. I am Lord Trevessa's man. Young Mr. Spence, Lord Trevessa's nephew, is the person who fell in love with your daughter. She is at Compton Fleury in Hants and I am ready to take you there now. Is not that enough—before you fool things dragging Scotland Yard in, for goodness sake examine the position first."

Williams put down the receiver.

"You are Lord Trevessa's man?"

"Yes."

"Well, if what you say is true, you have got to come with me to his lordship now."

"At this hour?"

"Yes, or I'll ring up the Yard and give you in charge."

That was pretty definite.

"As you please," said Chiles.

He was so tangled and mixed up in mind that he could neither resist nor argue. Mixed up, that is to say, as far as explanations were concerned.

It was a tangle. To revenge himself on Mrs. Duffield he had decided to put the Skrines on to her; arrived at the Skrines he had found himself face to face with the fact that the girl had a father who was searching for her and he had not received that news till he had disclosed his knowledge of the girl's whereabouts and so could not draw back. He couldn't explain all this either to Williams or Lord Trevessa—Lord Trevessa whose name he had promised to keep out of this business at any cost.

Well, he had to drag not only his lordship's name into this business, but also his person. That was the position Chiles had got himself into.

"As you please," said he.

Williams took up the receiver and spoke to the hotel bureau.

"Get round, as quick as you can, a closed touring car. I want to start at once for Hampshire."

"But his lordship does not live in Hampshire," said Chiles, interrupting. "He lives in Buckley Square."

"I'll pick him up in Buckley Square," replied Williams, "he'll have to come along. Now, Skrines, you take your wife home and leave us to finish this business. I promised you five hundred if you got me back my daughter and that sum you shall have if I do. I will let you know to-morrow how things have gone."

CHAPTER XIX

LORD TREVESSA had dined at home that night. It had been a stormy day, for he had arrived back in town to find the Conservative party trying to split itself—trying in fact to commit suicide at the Carlton Club behind closed doors. The Die-hards were in conflict with the Live-easies—and the Stiff-necks with the Facing-bothways. In the end a compromise had been reached, but it had been very exhausting.

He was seated to-night in his study boring his secretary with a description of the business, when a knock came to the door and Chiles appeared asking for an interview.

The secretary went out.

"There has been a very unpleasant development, my lord, with regard to the girl," said Chiles. "Her father has turned up."

"Her father?"

"Yes, my lord, this is the card he has given me." He presented a card and Lord Trevessa read:

Sir Arthur Williams,
Woolloomoogooloo
Savoy Hotel. (in pencil.)

"Wooloomoo-what?" asked his lordship testily, his glasses on his nose.

"An Australian," said Chiles, in explanation. "He's waiting."

"What the devil does the fellow want?" asked Lord Trevessa. "What on earth has he come here for?"

"He wished to see your lordship."

"See me? What on earth for? Stay! Sir Arthur Williams! I thought the girl was a servant girl."

"She was lost at nurse or something like that, your lordship, and this man has come from the Colonies to claim her."

"Well, have her sent for down at Compton and tell him I'm out."

"But your lordship——"

"I'm out—oh!"

Williams shown into the library had not remained there, he was a man of action accustomed to roam.

He found the hall, heard voices in the study and opened the door.

"Ah! Who are you, sir? Are you aware, sir——?"

"You Lord Trevessa?" asked Williams. "Excuse my coming in, but I have no time to sit waiting about. I want my daughter."

Now Trevessa, with the title and estates, had inherited something that atoned somewhat for his inherent snobbishness and the falsity of convention which he wore as a cloak—that something was the Trevessa temper.

"Why, curse and confound you, sir!" cried his lordship, "is a man's house to be invaded at any time of the night by any Tom, Dick or Harry who chooses to intrude himself? Are you aware that this is my study? Chiles, show this person out!"

"Oh, I can show myself out," said Williams. "I thought as much. I see plainly, now you are in the business, how deep in we've got to see. Bluff—well you won't bluff the magistrate at Bow Street to-morrow morning."

He turned to the door.

But the astute Chiles got between him and the door.

"Now don't you do anything foolish," said Chiles.

"Bow Street!" cried his lordship. "Stay, sir, what do you mean? What is this wild talk? Are you referring to that wretched girl?"

"I am referring to my daughter and to the scoundrel who

took her from her situation. Stand away from that door!"

"Now don't you do anything foolish," said Chiles, with his back to the door and his hand on the handle. "My lord, tell him all about it. Tell him——"

"Tell him!" cried Lord Trevessa. "Why, good God, sir, you don't think I was responsible for the actions of that stupid young ass, my nephew. Why, the business has only just been made known to me and for days I have been worried about it. It is true that falling in love with her, or something like that, he secured a home for her in the country; but the boy, though an ass, is innocent of ill intent, a quixotic fool, nothing more."

"Excuse me," said Williams who had turned and was fronting the other. "That is what *you* say. You begin with insults and when you find yourself in a corner you hand me out this talk—dope. I've had enough! If I listened to you and gave you time, would you use it to cover your tracks and would I hunt for my girl in vain? I don't know, anyhow I'm not going to try. I have one thing only to say. You must produce this girl to-night or I will do as I was going to do when that man barred the door—go to Scotland Yard and to-morrow swear a criminal information against you and this nephew of yours."

"Produce her to-night," cried Lord Trevessa, feeling as an ordinary non-conjuring man might feel if ordered to produce a rabbit from a hat, "but she is in the country. How am I to produce her to-night?"

"You've got to anyhow," said the other. "I have a touring car at the door, I ordered it for this very purpose, only you were so damn insulting I determined on the other course. Well? Will you come with me or shall I go to the Yard?"

"Sir," said Lord Trevessa, "the post of guardian is full of trouble, but having accepted it I must not complain; also I see that owing to this foolish boy's mad act you are naturally put out. I forgive your language. Chiles, my hat and overcoat."

"I'll wait for you in the hall," said Williams.

Five minutes later Chiles, Williams and his lordship getting into the big touring car in inverse order, took their seats.

"Drive to Winchester," said Chiles to the chauffeur, "and I will direct you from there."

The door shut and the car started.

A pleasant company for a long journey.

CHAPTER XX

NOW Scunner, after his interview with Pat, had gone later in the evening to Daddy Ambrose, and Daddy who had arranged with Pat to bring Eileen to the stable yard at two in the morning so that she might be taken away and married in Scotland was on the point of revealing the whole business to Scunner.

But God has given half-crazy people instincts to protect them when their wits are patchy, and instinct told Daddy not to reveal the full plan.

He only said that he was taking Eileen to the Big House that night and that arrangements were being made to take her to a safe place.

Scunner returned home partly satisfied. He went to bed and at ten minutes past two in the morning was awakened by a knocking at the door.

Three men were in the garden and a motor-car was purring in the lane.

"What do you want?" asked he, his head out of the window.

"We want the girl," came Chiles' voice. "Her father has come to fetch her. Come, rouse your wife up and look sharp."

"She isn't here," replied Farmer Duffield.

"Then where is she?"

"At the Big House. At least I believe so. Go'n ask Master Spence. I don't know nothing about her. I never had nothing to do with her, she was only here a day or two as servant——"

"Till she was hunted away into the woods," came Mrs. Duffield's voice over her husband's shoulder, "and had to

take shelter with Daddy Ambrose, terrified, pore thing of them Skrines. Who are you all out there in the garding? Don't be tramplin' my beds! Her father! Where's her father?"

"Here," came Williams' voice, "what have you to say?"

"What have I to say? You!—You!—a nice sort of father, handin' your unfortunate daughter over to them Skrines to be beat and starved and then darin' to come into my garding at two in the mornin' lookin' for her—I won't shut up, I won't, let me speak to the beast—Dead she'd have been only for Master Pat, and you comin' into my garding. Get out of it and come back in the mornin' like a respectable man, which you ain't. But there's no use in comin' here, you've heard what my husband says. Go and ask Master Pat."

Sounds of Scunner being forcibly removed from the window and the window shut.

"Quick," said Chiles, "let's get on to the house, Master Spence will be there and he'll tell us."

They left the garden and got into the car which drove them from the lane along the road and in through the gates of the big house.

The gates were always open.

Only a little while ago the Ford had turned out of them taking the loop road that hits the Winchester Road two miles off. If the touring car had taken the loop road Jane and she would have passed each other, but she hadn't.

Turning out of the car at the front door they came up the steps and rang and knocked.

Chiles was putting his hand to the bell again when the sounds of bars withdrawn came and the door flung open to reveal a hall brilliantly lit and seemingly filled with people, the butler, the two under butlers, the four housemaids, the still-room maid, the buttons, the cook and three kitchen maids, Mrs. Pounce and Miss Portman, and like a ghost behind all, Mr. Adams in pyjamas. They were all

only quarter dressed and the butler still held the poker in his hand.

"Lord Trevessa!" cried Amula, clasping her dressing gown tighter about her. "Oh, he's gone! He's run off with that girl again."

"What!" cried his lordship. Half dead with his horrible journey, he stared at his informant.

"He's run off to Scotland with her!"

"Come in," said his lordship to Williams, "come in. I crave your pardon for anything I may have said. You see an unfortunate man who, God knows, has tried to do his best." Then realising the crowd. "Get away—get to bed all of you. Burden, some brandy or something in the library. Come in, Amula, come in!"

Amula, regardless of the fact that she wore so little followed to the library where the lights were turned on.

"He left a note," said she. "He locked me in his room and left a note. I couldn't get out. Gone, he's gone to Scotland with her——"

"This is her father," said Lord Trevessa. "This is Sir Arthur Williams. Sir Arthur, Miss Portman."

He sat down exhausted.

Amula, almost sure that she was dreaming, stared at Sir Arthur.

She had seen Eileen, feather and all, to say nothing of the perambulator.

"The father of *that* girl!" she said, addressing his lordship.

"Yes, ma'm," replied Williams grimly. "The father of that girl, as you call her, and a nice lot of people she seems to have fallen amongst—abducted twice——"

The butler came in with drinks.

"But you must follow them," cried Amula, coming to her senses and suddenly clapping her hand to her brow. "Have you a car? Quick! they have only gone a few minutes, quick!"

"You idiot," cried his lordship. "Why didn't you tell

us that before? Burden, a little brandy. What's that?"

"The letter," cried Amula, who had put it in the pocket of her dressing gown and just discovered it with an aimlessly fumbling hand. "Don't wait to read it. Scotland, they'll have taken the Winchester Road, you'll catch them if you are quick, it's only the old car——"

She rushed before them to open the hall door.

CHAPTER XXI

WHEN Pat had locked Amula in his room and disposed of her clothes, he came along, candle in hand, down to the hall where he got his hat, through the kitchen to the back door which opened on the garden where the flower bed was that lay beneath his window. Here he found the suit-case, picked it up and made for the stable yard.

The moon was getting to the west, but the yard was lit bright almost as day, and there before their time by a few minutes stood two figures in the shadow of the west wall. It was Eileen and Daddy. Pat ran to Eileen and kissed her.

"Now we're all right," said he. "Daddy, you've got to help me to push her out into the yard. They won't hear me cranking up in the yard if I get her by the house wall. Eileen, I've got a cloak for you, it's over the petrol tins, wait till I fetch it. Now you're all right. Come on, Daddy —shove like blazes while I hop in and steer her—that's right—way enough."

Out he hopped.

"One moment," said he. "Let's see that we've got everything. Money's all right," he felt in his pockets, "petrol, spare tyres. Why Daddy, what are you crying about?"

"I'm so happy," sniffed Mr. Ambrose, "to think that you and she are to be one—dear sweet Eileen and you are to be one—my dear children, may you be happy—but it grieves me to part with her."

"Come along with us," said Pat, out of his generous heart. "You can sit on the tins."

"I cannot leave my rabbits," replied the old man, "I cannot leave the trees, the roads are no good to me now. I have lost their touch; once upon a time it was different. I left home in my earliest youth because my father lived in a house. That is the trouble with humanity——"

The tower clock struck two.

Pat began to crank up.

"Ever since the time of the pyramids—ah well—ah well——"

Jane began to roar.

"Hop in," cried Pat. "Quick, Eileen! Good-bye Daddy! I'll be back soon. Out of the way, Daddy——"

Jane began to move.

Mr. Ambrose made movements of his arms as though he were throwing confetti after them.

Then he ran, following Jane till she disappeared through the gates.

They turned to the left and five hundred yards down into the loop road. The hedges were high here.

"You see," said Pat, "even if they heard us going down the drive they can't follow. They've got no car. I wonder did old Portman hear?"

"Who?" asked Eileen.

"Oh, a woman, she'd have stopped us only—no matter, I'll tell you after—are you warm?"

"Yes," whispered Eileen, she would have snuggled closer to him only he was driving. She tightened the cloak round her and was silent.

She felt somehow that she was Pat's now, his in a different way from before. All her miraculous experiences since leaving Peter Street seemed fused into one, with this for the apex. Marriage! She had seen marriages and she knew, at least, that they were things that riveted two people together, that two people married were different forever to what they had been. But—as to how she was to be married or what they were to do after marriage the poor child was as virginally innocent as Jane herself. Pat

drove carefully. The road was untarred and stony, it was a short cut, but short cuts often prove pretty long. He talked.

"We're going to Larry's brother's place; it's just over the border on the moors and I've got a letter from Larry to him. You see when we've been there twenty-one days we can get married without any bother. It's different here—I've worked out the way to the Great North Road and once we're on it, Jane will fly. I must get some grub somewhere, a loaf of bread and a ham is what we want. I told them to make me some sandwiches but they didn't—hello!"

Jane was bumping. The off back tyre had gone, pierced by some flint. He pulled up and got out and examined the injury then he made Eileen get out.

"I've got to jack her up," said Pat, taking off his coat. "Stick on a new tyre—no use bothering and it won't take long."

Then as he set to work he paused and listened.

The sound of a car came from a distance. Used to out-of-doors and the measurements of distances and sounds he could tell that it was a big car and that it had turned from the main road into the lane that would lead by Duffield's.

He looked at his watch, it was seven minutes past two—only seven minutes since they had left the yard and an accident already!

He listened. A car on the main road was nothing even at two in the morning, but a car turning off the main road —what business could it have here at this time in the morning?

The sound of the car suddenly ceased. He knew at once, it must have stopped at Duffield's, then came a far faint honk-honk, the noise a chauffeur makes when he wants to attract attention.

Pat set to work furiously. Jane jacked up at length beneath the moon seemed exhibiting her off hind leg seeking sympathetic attention. Eileen helped, doing as she was

directed without question, and the tyre came off ; as it did so, the sound of the car in the distance was heard again. It was drawing closer, now it altered, it was taking the Compton drive.

He knew quite well now. A car had stopped at Duffield's and gone on to the house, what he could not tell was whether it had been coming from London or Mamsbury before turning towards Duffield's farm, for between the loop and the main road there is a rise of ground which cuts off sound, and it was only on clearing this rise that he had distinguished the sound of the distant car.

There had been no time to get a hint of its true direction.

All this was running through Pat's head as he laboured away, Eileen helping. Someone had come, ten to one, from London, stopped at Duffield's for only a few minutes and then gone on to the house.

That was the fatal thing, otherwise the car might have been driven by some friend of Scunner calling for refreshment or petrol, but no friend of Scunner's would go on to the house.

As he worked, everything seemed against him, the jack slipped, the pump had hidden itself, then when it was found the detachable rubber tube was nowhere to be found. He found it at last and fixed it and with foot on the plate of the pump began to inflate.

He had detached the pump and was in the act of removing the jack when the sound of the mysterious car recommenced.

It was coming away from the house. Would it come this way ?

"Jump in, Eileen," cried Pat. "Quick ! Catch hold of the pump, stow it under the seat, here's the jack—do you hear that beastly car ? I don't know ! No, I don't think so, but it's better to be getting. All right ? "

He began to crank up.

Then he jumped on board.

Now the touring car had at that moment left the gates of

Compton, making not for the loop road which was unknown to Chiles or the chauffeur or Lord Trevessa, but the road leading through the village past Scunner's lane to join the main road.

The two cars were in fact making for the same objective and at the same speed and Mr. Adams, had he been watching, might have calculated that Pat at the point where the loop made its junction with the main would be some two hundred yards ahead.

Adams would have taken into consideration the fact that though Pat's journey was the shortest, it was the most winding which would mean diminution of speed.

As he turned into the main road sure enough there, coming along from the direction of Mamsbury was the mysterious car, a huge brute moving swiftly and fighting against the moonlight with acetylene lamps.

Now, before starting from the house Williams had dispossessed the chauffeur of his place and taken the steering wheel. It cost him a five pound note and a promise of indemnity in case of accident, but that was nothing. Williams was no man to sit and be driven on a chase like this, *he* was the hunter, also, in parenthesis be it said, he was an expert driver and mechanic. He was not long in getting at the innards of the touring car, a good engine that had been hacked, gear that did not always engage when wanted, efficient brakes.

"How about juice?" he asked the chauffeur.

"I reckon we have enough for another fifty miles," replied the other.

"Well, we can fill somewhere. What's your name?"

"Gunn."

They turned into the main road.

It lay before them like a tarred ribbon in the moonlight, not a thing visible on it.

"They've got a long start," said Williams.

"Looks like it," said Gunn and fell silent.

The hand of the speedometer leaped from twenty-five to

thirty—thirty-five—forty—it paused a moment and leaped to forty-five.

"She ain't meant for racin' no more than a Black Maria," said Gunn.

The speedometer pointed to fifty.

A knocking came on the glass from the caged ones and the muffled voice of Lord Trevessa.

"Slower—slower!"

"If a tyre goes, we'll be playin' our harps—mind that dip—Lord! There's a car!"

Jane had disembogued from the loop road.

"It's them," continued Mr. Gunn. "They're puttin' on speed, she's a Ford—mind now, mind now—it's too narrow to race her side by side, and it's only a couple of miles to the Winchester road, she'll have to slow and we'll have to slow—you don't want to ram her, do you? Get her on the Winchester road. We'll catch her at Winchester, there's a double bend at Winchester and we can shout for the police."

"Right," said Williams.

"May I ask, sir," said Gunn, as they slowed for the turn, "who the chap is you're after?"

"Spence is his name."

"Why, that's the nephew of the old gentleman inside, Lord Trevessa—I know his chauffeur. Young Mr. Spence, why he owns all that big place and twenty thousand a year they say when he gets of age."

"He'll get of age on crutches when I catch him," said Williams. "Either that or——" He did not finish.

Jane had turned the corner into the Winchester road.

Now where the road from Compton enters the road to Winchester twenty yards further along towards Winchester on the opposite side is the opening of the Bunbury Road.

Pat, on turning the corner, had decided in a flash to leave the main and whisk into this by-road suddenly revealed to him.

He had never used it before, this was out of his country, but he knew Winchester and the dangers of that horrible bottle-neck where policemen were always standing in the day-time and doubtless by night as well. Besides, he was not absolutely sure that the pursuing car was chasing him—this road would be a test.

He turned down it.

It has high hedges on either side and it is wide enough for two vehicles to pass with caution, vast hay carts in hay harvest time creak down it and the hedges are a revelation to a Naturalist. Here the Tudor rose reigns above the sloes and blackberries and the Bunbury sloes are worth reigning over, for in the whole length and breadth of England no such sloe-gin is made as here.

Two miles of these wonderful hedges lead to a village green with a pond in the centre, and twenty cottages and a public house make up the village.

The public house is named the Silent Woman, and the creaking sign displays a brilliantly re-done picture of a woman without a head.

But the point I am getting at like Pat, is the village green. It is the end of the Bunbury Road, the place is a *cul de sac*.

Pat did not know this, he only knew that he *was* pursued, for the roar of Maria came from behind him and turning he could see her lights. Also Maria was honking like the lost soul of a turkey cock, maybe with the idea of rousing people if possible to join in the chase—Pat honked for a different reason—this was the chosen place to meet stray pigs, tramps, poachers, and drunkards sleeping out.

He met the village green instead, with the pond in its middle reflecting the last of the moon and slowed to twenty as he dashed on to it.

Now opposite to him between the Silent Woman and the row of cottages to its left there is a gateway with a history. There was a gate there in the time of King John and a right of way through Squire Bunbury's meadow and so through the woods to Camfort. Squire Bunbury, in the time of

King James, fastened the gate and Mockford the landlord of the Silent Woman, just built, broke the fastening. It was a right of way. Bunbury fastened it again, Mockford unfastened it, Bunbury had the law of him, Mockford beat him.

Bunbury died, his son succeeded him and Mockford's son succeeded his father.

Bunbury's son fastened the gate. Mockford's son unfastened it. It was a right of way.

There was a law case and Mockford's son was beaten. The right had lapsed because the gate had been kept closed too long, also they said the judge had been bribed.

There was a village riot. The gate was torn down. It was put up again and the magistrates fined some of the villagers and sent others to prison. Bunbury's son dying at ninety-three and repenting of his sins ordered the right of way to be restored, the gate was removed and a stile put up. Bunbury's grandson unable to destroy the right of way but feeling vicious against the village folk because they had stuck a "No Popery" notice on one of his walls removed the stile and restored the gate whilst admitting the right of way.

But the villagers loved their stile, they used to court on it and it was a lovely stile to watch girls in crinolines getting over, and Bunbury's grandson's cows were hocked.

Assizes and Jim Blethorne was transported for life.

At long length came a Bunbury who, sick of the gate always being left open and absolutely refusing to put up a stile, took the gate away altogether.

In doing this he smashed the ancient right of the villagers to graze one cow and one goat in the meadow.

They *could* graze a cow and goat there, but since there was no gate the animals strayed and when the communal cow owners went to milk the communal cow they would find her maybe halfway to Winchester.

It was a cunning stroke on the Bunbury side and it was an opening for Pat.

Avoiding the pond he steered straight for the gateway.

Jane was used to cross-country work, but Jane was old, she had worked hard all her life and had earned a rest. We don't all get what we earn in this life, but she did.

She took the meadow like a young thing, it was old meadow unploughed since the Heptarchy and fifty yards or so from the gateway like the centre of the secret of its youth and greenness there was a path of soggy ground.

Jane stuck, struggled and succumbed.

CHAPTER XXII

PAT did not wait to investigate, he pulled Eileen from the car and helping her and half running, made for a belt of trees on the right.

Cross country was no use, Eileen could never run. Everything was over and though the pursuing car had stopped at the gate a tall man was chasing across the meadow calling on the runaways to stop; the pursuit would be up against them all over the country. Yes, everything was over, and still Pat kept on, one arm around the girl until she dropped in the shelter of the trees.

The wretched Eileen had been run away with almost to death.

She looked dead as she lay and Pat now shouting for help, scarcely felt the blow as Williams shot him aside and seized the girl in his arms. Then he was running after Williams who was running across the field toward the gateway and the inn.

The chauffeur had knocked the inn up and the landlord in a short coat and a long night shirt was standing on the steps with a lamp in his hand.

Pat saw it all as one sees things in a dream, saw Lord Trevessa seated on the running board of Black Maria, Chiles helping in with Eileen, the landlord following with the light, and over all the creaking sign of the Silent Woman, swinging in the wind.

He stood by the gateway, then he saw Lord Trevessa rise up and go into the inn and a light appear at an upper window.

He sat down on the running board left vacant and watched the house.

He knew Eileen was not dead, just before Williams had knocked him aside he saw her stir and open her eyes, but he was half dead himself.

Not only was he exhausted, but he had lost heart. The sight of Lord Trevessa seated on the running board of the car had hit him strangely, it was as though he had pulled a temple down.

Who was the tall man who had seized Eileen and carried her off evidently to succour her—a policeman, a doctor—he didn't know. He only knew that everything was done with and over. That he had made hay and hash of everything.

He watched the inn front and the Silent Woman creaking on her sign. Alone, for the chauffeur had followed the rest of them, he sat whilst herald of the dawn the bleak crow of a cock came from a cottage garden beyond the green.

* * * * * * *

Lord Trevessa shown into the landlord's parlour where a paraffin lamp had been lit, sat waiting and listening to the sounds from the room overhead where Williams had carried his child.

The landlord brought in a tin of biscuits that smelt and tasted as though they had been kept in a damp pocket, and a bottle of whisky and siphon.

His lordship ate some biscuits and drank some of the whisky and told the landlord to tell the gentleman upstairs where to find him and then refusing the offer of eggs and bacon and a cup of tea, he sat waiting and listening.

The room had been papered in late Victorian times and there were pictures on the walls in bird's-eye maple frames, a stuffed dog with glass eyes under a glass case stood in a corner and there were books on a shelf.

Nearly half an hour passed and the door opened and in came Williams.

"Well, sir?" said his lordship without rising. "How is the girl?"

Williams shut the door.

" She's better ! Where is your nephew ? I wish to speak to him. I would like to have a talk with him before giving you my mind on this unhappy business, it may make a lot of difference."

The word " nephew " seemed like a prod in the eye to the other, the unaccustomed whisky did not ease the inflammation either.

" Damn my nephew," burst out the old gentleman, " don't speak to me of my nephew. Dragged from London at this hour of the night—insulted—driven God knows where—nearly upset in that confounded car, chasing——"

" I know," said Williams, " but wait here please. I've got to have my say in this business. Wait here, please." He left the room and came outside. He saw Pat sitting on the running board of the car and came towards him.

Pat watched the other coming, then he rose up.

" How is she ? " asked Pat, a shake in his voice.

" My daughter is better, thank you," replied the other.

" Your daughter ! "

" My daughter, if it is all the same to you. Come with me."

He led the way to the inn door.

The landlord had lit the passage lamp and in the light of it, he held Pat at arm's length and looked in his face, looked him up and down, then :

" Come outside again," said he.

Outside he took Pat's arm in an arm of steel and led him back towards the car.

It was horrible. Pat had never been manhandled before, he was brave enough but this was new—and it was her father !

It was like walking arm in arm with a high explosive.

At the car Williams released him.

" Now," said he, " we've got to have this thing out between us two."

" Go ahead," said Pat. Williams's tone and the flatter-

ing fact that he was treating him as an equal in age gave him a sudden new footing, he was no longer afraid.

"You were running away with my daughter."

"I suppose you mean Eileen. Yes."

"Why?"

"How do you mean?"

"Good God, isn't my meaning plain enough? For what purpose were you taking her away from Compton?"

"I was taking her to Scotland to get married to her. It was the only way of keeping her at Compton."

He explained.

"And why, may I ask, did you take her away from Peter Street?"

"Because she was ill-treated."

"Yet she tells me that the Skrines were kind to her in their way."

"I don't know anything about their way," said Pat, "I only know Charlie Simmins, uncle's chauffeur, told me she was having the life of a dog.

"I went with him there one day to make a bet with Skrines and I met Eileen there and arranged to see her in Kensington Gardens. A beast of a woman saw us walking together and told uncle and he had me followed, so I couldn't see her, so I took the old Ford and fetched her down to Compton and stuck her with Scunner Duffield. If the damn fools had left her alone it would have been all right, but they came interfering and uncle said I'd have to leave Compton and I said if I did I'd hook it away to sea—then I heard they were going to fetch Eileen away back to Skrines, so I made up my mind the only thing to do was to get married to her; but you can't do that in England without all sorts of fuss, but you can in Scotland, you only have to live there three weeks."

"That's nonsense," said Williams, "you can't register a marriage that hasn't received the consent of the parents."

"You can get married in Scotland without anyone's consent."

"Rubbish," replied Williams, not over sure himself, but sticking to his point, "not legally."

"I don't know whether it's legally or not but the 'cyclopædia says you can."

"We'll leave it at that. Your intention was to marry her?"

"Of course it was."

"How old are you exactly?"

"Nearly seventeen."

"Do you care for her?"

"Of course I care for her." There was a shyness in the tone of this answer that told a lot.

"You are ready to marry her to-morrow?"

"Should think I was."

Williams put his hand on Pat's shoulder.

"Hop into the car," said he, "and sit there till I come back."

He returned to the inn.

CHAPTER XXIII

LORD TREVESSA rose to meet him as he entered the room.

"Please sit down," said Williams. "I have seen your nephew and I think the interview has been satisfactory."

"I have told you, sir," said Lord Trevessa, "that my nephew——"

"I know he's a young scamp—but he's got sense, and I've arranged to say nothing more on certain conditions."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, indeed. Are you aware that he has gained the affections of my daughter?"

"No, sir. I am not," replied Shutters.

"Well he has," said the other suddenly irritated by his lordship's tone which seemed to say that the affections of Eileen were nothing to him and of no account in aristocratic circles—no more than the existence of the colonial knight, her father.

"And," continued the latter, "that being so, it is a serious thing for her. I am not one of the old-fashioned parents who consider that the choice of a husband or the choice of a wife are matters not for the person most concerned in the choice, but for the parents. That attitude is, I believe, or ought to be, out of date, at least it is with me, in the consideration of the happiness and future of my daughter Eileen."

Shutters was experiencing now what the Chamber of Commerce of Wooloomoogooloo had experienced many times to its cost, for if Williams had a fault, it was not

brevity of speech—unless indeed he was talking to an employee.

On his legs in the Chamber of Commerce or the Assembly, or simply seated like this, but speaking on a major subject, he was as bad as Shutters himself.

It was, in fact, the meeting of two bores and like two rams their horns interlocked.

"I do not know in the least, sir," said Lord Trevessa, "what bearing all this may have on any present condition of things, but I understand you to hold views on the question of marriage and parental control that are not shared, I believe, by the more responsible and thinking sections of the community, at all events not by me. But all this is idle, let us discuss the present position. Now that you have recovered your daughter, may I ask you——"

"A moment," said Williams, expanding his chest like a diver before a plunge, "I gather from the tenour of your remarks that we are seriously divided in our opinions on a subject which is, at least to me and mine, of the very deepest importance; if the word 'importance,' indeed, is big enough to attach to a proposition involving the foundation of a family, a foundation which, in my opinion is not worth twopence unless it is morticed by love applied with the trowel of content. No, sir, we may laugh at the fancies of lovers but those fancies are, believe me, the flowers of the tree of existence and the love which brings these fancies to flower is, believe me, a sacred thing—but let us cut all this short, you heard me a moment ago when I said that it has been brought home to me that however criminal, however to be condemned may be the actions of your nephew—and mark you, that which happened to-night is only a repetition of that which has happened before—as I was saying, however criminal may be the actions of your nephew he has engaged the affections of my child—stolen them. That fact I have taken into consideration in forming my ultimatum."

"Your which—I beg your pardon?"

"My terms, the terms on which I will conclude this business——"

"I am quite prepared to pay——"

"Excuse me! It is your nephew who has to pay—and if you mean money, we are not in need of money, thank you. I could write you a cheque here and now for a million without feeling the loss. No, sir, by payment, I mean marriage. Your nephew has got to marry my child or take the consequences of his acts."

"*Marry* her!"

"Yes. First of all I have seen him and spoken to him. He is a clean and bright young chap, but I have seen as good in the Penitentiary, run on the rocks for want of a rudder. If he marries my daughter, he will have a rudder, not her, but me. Secondly, it is a question of the girl's happiness; thirdly, he has compromised her and me. My good name is involved in the good name of my daughter."

"Why, good God, sir," cried his lordship, dropping all verbosity, "she was a nursemaid."

It only wanted that as a last rivet to Williams's determination.

As a matter of fact just as he had instinctively and at once disliked Lord Trevessa so had he instinctively and at once liked Pat.

He honestly believed from what he had seen that Pat had not injured the girl, but Williams in some ways was a hard and strange man, his pride was up and the smack it had just received didn't bring it down.

"An accident of life brought her to a humble position," he replied, "but she is my daughter first and last and all the time. Your nephew has compromised her and made her care for him; but for the latter fact I would have the police in right now and charge him over this business.

"But mind you, you are free to object, you are free to say to yourself, 'No nursemaids in my family, thank you.' You are free, as he is evidently under age, to veto the business; and if you do so, I will take your decision as final

and say no more on the subject. But I will at once instruct my solicitors to put the law in motion."

"Why," cried his lordship, "I believe you are threatening me!"

"Oh, not in the least," replied the other. "Many a man in my position would have moved to action without a word. I am simply stating what I am going to do in defence of myself, my daughter, and I believe her happiness.

"There is no threat in requiring your nephew to fulfil his promise of marriage—for that has been given—to a girl sweet and innocent and, in a worldly way, wealthy. For on the day of her marriage, should she marry with my consent, she shall receive a dowry of five hundred thousand pounds."

"I have never even seen the girl," said the unhappy nobleman flapping his hand on the arm of his chair, testily, yet with a suggestion of the last movements of a landed salmon. "I have had nothing but trouble owing to her and my attempt to act in this business in the capacity of a guardian in the best interest of my nephew, who is under age, a minor, an infant in the eyes of the law and a foolish young man, I believe not responsible for his actions—as I have said I have never even seen the girl——"

"Well, you'd better come up and see her now," said the father of Eileen, "and after that we can have another word on the position."

CHAPTER XXIV

WHEN Lord Trevessa, Williams and Chiles started off in pursuit of Pat, Miss Portman ordered the front door to be closed and the servants who had strayed back to the hall to return to their rooms. She, in fact, took charge of the situation in a manner that suddenly enraged Mrs. Pounce. Mrs. Pounce had never been too favourably inclined towards Miss Portman, she had secretly resented her interference that time long ago when Amula had triumphantly convicted the servant girl of stealing the wine. The affair of old Carter and the boot boy had not smoothed matters—but up till now Amula had never given general orders to the servants.

As they went off Mrs. Pounce turning to Amula said : " I beg your pardon, miss, but might I have a word with you in the library ? "

" Certainly," said the other.

" I only wish to say," continued the good lady when they were in the still lit library, " that the servants here, miss, are under my orders and that it does not make for my authority if orders are given them by anyone else."

" Indeed," said Amula, " but as it happens I am here by the invitation of Lord Trevessa to look after matters, and, if you will allow me to say so, things have been sadly neglected."

Mrs. Pounce bridled. It is almost a lost art. She drew back her head and expanded her ample bosom.

" I have been thirty years in this house," said Mrs. Pounce, " and such words have never been spoken to me before. Will you kindly put your finger on anything that

has been neglected for which I am responsible? Come, kindly put your finger on——"

"Why look at to-night," said Miss Portman, "look at what has happened——"

"Are you referring to Master Pat?"

"I am."

"And in what way am I responsible for Master Pat? A better boy there never was if he *has* run foolish because of a girl. I am the *housekeeper* of Compton, my duty is the house, not Master Pat. Mr. Adams was engaged to look after Master Pat and he has always done his duty, but it's hard to hold young people if they are in love."

"'Run *foolish* after a girl'."

"Yes, miss, those were my words, which I am not accustomed to have took up; and it's my belief if he is so set on her she's maybe worth being set on, and it's my belief there are some people in this world no man would ever run foolish over, and you may take that from me or leave it—"

"No wonder things have happened," said Miss Portman, as though she were addressing the starry host. "No wonder, if that is your attitude in this matter. But I can assure you of this, things will be changed in Compton now I have come. When Lord Trevessa brings that unfortunate boy back I will tell him exactly what you have said and—I think it is unnecessary to continue this discussion."

"But I don't," fired the other, "I have one word to say—if you've come I go, and that's the end of it."

"We will not continue the discussion," replied Miss Portman turning to the door.

She went upstairs to her room in such an unchristianlike temper that she did not notice that "Missionary Life in Manchuria" had been flung in the corner of the room, the candle deported and her clothes gone.

She bounced into bed and turned off the light and lay thinking.

She wanted nothing better than to reign at Compton. On receiving the telegram from Lord Trevessa asking her to

come, as Pat was giving trouble, she had scarcely been able to believe her eyes and everything had gone to a charm. She had been able to give the information at first-hand that the errant lovers had gone to Scotland—at least towards Scotland—and she reckoned that when they were brought back she would reap her harvest as manageress of Compton.

Pounce should go and some of the servants, the place was overstaffed, it was absurd to keep up such an establishment with no family and no guests, practically, and therefore no entertaining. Mr. Adams should go—at all events he was going—Adams gone, his place would be taken by an efficient man, a man " used to boys " and able to maintain discipline. She had in her mind one, Augustus Slimon, who had started in life as a missionary in Uganda, at Bongo Bongo to be more precise, and who was now " working in the East End in connexion with a mission." A gentleman with a long neck and a huge Adam's apple, such an Adam's apple as no gentleman would carry about unashamed, a long head, dry sand-coloured hair, slopy shoulders, and feet that he seemed to have picked up in Bongo Bongo. But he had a hard eye and a way with the tag-rag of Commercial Road and he was " earnest," also, and, in some extraordinary way, he had an attraction for women. A sexual-religious attraction most irritating to the understanding of a common sinner.

Pat would have cut this fellow's liver out or broken his neck with a booby trap on the stairs—but we anticipate.

Amula, lying awake, visualised Slimon in charge of Pat.

It was an extraordinary fact that she had taken a " down" on the boy. It was perhaps the reflection of his distaste and physical dislike of her, but it was there, and soothed by imaginings of his subjugation under her rule, she fell asleep.

She lay and snored, and the night wore on and the cocks crowed and dawn came and the tower clock struck six.

She awoke to the sound and then came another sound,

voices from below—they had returned. She switched on the light and sprang from the bed.

Pat had been brought back without doubt and the girl.

She had only seen the girl once, that day by Kensington Gardens, and then she had only caught a glimpse of her, but that had been enough to show the depths to which Pat had been able to sink.

Rubbing the sleep from her eyes she prepared hastily to dress.

CHAPTER XXV

CHILES sat by the chauffeur during the return journey; Pat, Eileen, his lordship and Williams inside. Arrived at the house they found Mrs. Pounce up and fires lit and his lordship, leaving the others, drew the housekeeper inside into the library.

The unfortunate man was suffering from exhaustion, from the bad whisky and worse biscuits he had been forced to consume by way of sustenance and from the effect of Williams.

They had gone at it again like rams after his lordship had been upstairs to inspect pale little Eileen lying with a rug over her, and Williams had won. He had the toughest horns and the longest wind and really, as his lordship began to perceive, towards the end there was not much to butt about. A girl who seemed a nice little thing and whose dowry, if she married with her father's consent, would be half a million, with the inheritance coming to him on his father's death of three million and the great wool business of Sir Arthur Williams, MacFarlane & Co was not to be sneezed at and Williams would have a steadying influence on Pat. All the same, she had once been a nursemaid and that fact was a drop of acid that precipitated content and did not improve the humour of his lordship—also he was threatened by a touch of gout.

" Well, Mrs. Pounce," said he, " you see we are back, you see we are back. Shut the door, please. No, nothing thanks to eat, I shall go to bed for a while, but I would like first to tell you all about the business—most extraordinary —most extraordinary. That was Sir Arthur Williams, the girl is his daughter. Sir Arthur Williams, one of our chief

Captains of Industry—most remarkable and romantic story which need not engage us now, however—suffice it to say, as Patrick seems to have betrothed himself to the girl, I am permitting an engagement between them."

"To marry her!" cried Mrs. Pounce.

"I am permitting them to become engaged. Please don't interrupt me. The girl will—er—finish her education. Patrick will—er—see the world. Sir Arthur Williams intends to take him on a tour of the colonies, so that he may see the Empire of which he is a citizen. In the event of marriage at a later date, the girl will receive a large dowry.

"After all we live in a strange world, social conditions have altered—many very good people are now engaging in commerce—all the same it is very annoying——"

A knock came to the door and Mrs. Pounce went to it. Came a servant's voice confabulating with the lady.

"What's that? What's that?" cried his lordship, testily, his sense of dignity upset by this servant's talk in his presence. "Who's that and what do they want?"

"It's a housemaid, your lordship," replied Mrs. Pounce, "sent by Miss Portman to tell you——"

"Yes, what does she want?"

"She has sent to say she cannot find her clothes——"

"Damn her clothes! What have I to do with her clothes—if she had been looking after her business properly this wouldn't have occurred to-night. I sent for her to guard that boy and look——"

"Guard him!" cried Mrs. Pounce, "all she's ever done in this house is to spy about and make trouble."

"Well there's an end of it," said his lordship.

PART III

CHAPTER I

PLANS made in a hurry are subject to the faults and failings inseparable from hasty construction.

Now Sir Arthur Williams' plan for the disposal of Pat and Eileen was a thing conceived during the furious chase of Jane by Black Maria and born an hour or so later in Bunbury village outside the "Silent Woman" as he stood looking at Pat and approving of him.

Williams was not a snob; all the same the momentary view of Compton he had obtained, taken together with the momentary view of Lord Trevessa's town house and the personality of his lordship, had a very considerable part both in the conception and birth of the plan.

Here was Aristocracy. The real thing. The old crusted Aristocracy of England still clung about by its desmesnes, its pomp and curious circumstance. He had suddenly realised that to make Eileen part of this was in his power. A man of quick decision and great strength of character he had battered down Lord Trevessa's defences and, without putting the garrison to the sword, had imposed upon it terms of peace that were very like—well, most terms of peace have in them a tinge of black-mail.

Pat was to marry Eileen, not now but later. Pat was to come with him abroad and be made a man of; he, Williams, would settle a very big dowry on Eileen. There was jam mixed with the Gregory's powder, all the same the taste of the powder remained and it was this taste that kept the unfortunate Lord Trevessa awake during the hour or two he might have snatched for slumber when he retired

to his room at half past six. He had undressed and got into bed but he could not sleep.

He felt in the grip of Williams. He felt that somehow he ought to have made a better fight. He ought to have said, "Do your worst, sir, and be damned to you." He hadn't, he couldn't; this man undoubtedly would have made a frightful scandal, but truth to tell it was less fear of scandal that had frightened him on to his knees than fear of Williams. Not physical fear, the old gentleman was brave enough, but just psychological fear. Williams had overborne him like a strong wind, he couldn't be resisted—besides that cursed Pat was all in the wrong—if he had been in the right then things would have been quite different. Well, there was no use in troubling now, the thing was to make the best of it.

Nursemaid! Smother the thought, and no one need ever know. The girl could no doubt be knocked into shape, she would go to school and so on—but Williams! Well, Williams after all wasn't so bad. Not a gentleman, no maybe not, but a colonial. That blessed word "colonial" covered a lot of sins.

Why look here, there was Sir Ambrose Pyecroft, the Australian Councillor, who had been a grocer's assistant, he had married Lady Alardyce Meynell, and bought an estate in Huntingdonshire. Why shouldn't this chap do something like that with his (Lord Trevessa's) help.

Ugh! still, there was no use in kicking, the chap had to be gilded, the bad job had to be made the best of—get him to buy an estate, maybe marry him to someone—maybe—

The old gentleman dozed off and found himself in a mixed crowd in St. George's, Hanover Square, where Williams was being married to Eileen who was somehow a duchess, whilst Pat was somewhere in the congregation "framing" to make trouble about something.

Meanwhile Williams, shown to a room, had gone to bed

in a spare set of the butler's pyjamas and slept the sleep of the just till awakened by Roberts at ten minutes to ten. Roberts, having pulled up the blind and intimated that not only was the bath ready, but that in the bathroom the gentleman would find not only shaving materials but also combs and brushes and that the bathroom was next door, left the room and Williams for a moment before springing out of bed lay looking around him.

It was a beautiful morning and the sunlight flooding the room said, Look! Here is a bedroom such as you have never slept in before.

The Palace Hotel, San Francisco has wonderful bedrooms —trash! your room at the Savoy would be hard to beat— derision! This great room with its great four-poster, its tapestry, its furniture of a long-gone age, its atmosphere of ease and tranquillity, this is History. Queen Elizabeth might have slept here—possibly did. This is what no man could buy without destroying its charm— which is only for the rightful owner, the man who inherits it.

He sprang out of bed and went to the window.

The gardens of Compton long used by Time; rose-red walls, the black of yews, the white of pigeons against the diamond clear blue sky greeted him.

So old all of it, so beautiful, so peaceful with an assured tranquillity that had hung here long before Charles was King!

Williams was not destitute of the artistic temperament. It had been worn down and suppressed by the labours of years, by the contact with the hard in life and the new of the Colonies. All the same, when a boy and when travelling with his father, who had been an architect, he had felt the charm of the old in places like Canterbury and Lichfield. There always hung in his mind a picture of a great park somewhere in Buckinghamshire, the mellow light of afternoon, the oaks standing in their ponds of shadow, the rooks calling from the woods, the great old Georgian

manor house away in the distance—a place not for such as him and appealing to him all the more because of that fact.

The gardens of Compton recalled it.

He had broken in here.

He went back in his mind over the doings of the night before.

He was an accepted but not an acceptable guest. The old gardens said that to him as plainly as though they had suddenly taken to themselves vocal chords and a voice.

"You are not of us, never can be, you are an outsider. We belong—you don't."

Actually and for a moment he felt as a man feels who, drunk the night before, has committed excesses and faults against good form and good citizenship.

The old gardens seemed to cast quiet contempt on his doings, on his victory over Lord Trevessa, on his position now.

He had forced the old man to accept Eileen. He couldn't force the old gardens to accept her—maybe they had done so already, but he could not know that.

He left the window and came out into the corridor to find the bathroom, it was, as the manservant had said, next door.

It was not an up-to-date bathroom. Evidently installed during the past twenty years or so and fixed by some good old country firm of plumbers whose grandfathers and great-grandfathers had plumbed Compton and Haydock and the adjoining country seats, it spoke of the fact; tiled floors, tiled walls, vast taps, each a Niagara—they did not exist here. In fact the hot water tap when it was turned on belched in the face of the Australian knight and then ran rust colour, though clearing at length as if calling to mind that the man was a guest.

The place was a disgrace to wealth, but it was one of the things you would not have had otherwise at Compton, and

was a relation of sorts to the minstrels gallery, the priests holes, the powder closets——

Williams had a sense of all this as he tubbed in tepid water, and finished dressing. He was not only an outsider but an anachronism. Then downstairs in the great hall and passing into the breakfast room the feeling grew worse.

Not a soul but the prim-faced manservant—and such a view from the window!

There was the great Park he had seen once as a boy, only different, with the tiny river crossing it beyond the ha-ha and the little bridge across the river and the great masses of the woods far beyond. Quiet under the beautiful autumn day it seemed looking at the intruder.

Yes, he might force Lord Trevessa to accept his daughter but he could not force that park and woods. Maybe indeed they had accepted her in spirit but he knew nothing of that.

"Eggs and bacon, please."

"Tea or coffee, sir?"

"Coffee."

The very silver stamped with the Spence arms, the coffee pot—they all seemed created to impress the fact upon his mind that he was not of them. Fortunately there was no crest on the eggs.

But there was a great blazing-faced Admiral of the Blue in a coat covered with stars and medals and he stared furiously out of a canvas on the opposite wall at the world and at the guest.

"If you'd had to face that chap last night," said the eggs, "you wouldn't have found things so easy."

"He'd have booted you out of that inn," said the bacon.

"No, he wouldn't," said Williams, but he wasn't too sure.

After breakfast he came out into the hall. Here he met Mrs. Pounce who introduced herself with the news that his Lordship would not be down for an hour yet. Eileen who

had been taken to a room in the left wing was all right, but still asleep.

The morning papers had just come and were laid out in the hall, but Williams preferred a breath of fresh air out of doors. He took his hat and went out.

Yes, there were the rooks! He could hear them cawing away over there in the woods—very faint. Now an outburst nearer from the trees beyond the back of the house.

Williams came along the front till he reached the turn that brought one to the delightful region of the potting sheds, the greenhouses, the manure heaps and the sheds where garden implements were stored.

Here he met Larry and had a short chat with him, here also he came across Horniblow and his assistant wheeling along a cart with tree-cutting tackle just as Pat had come across him that day after his return from London.

Horniblow was civil but not very communicative. The big elm by the herb garden her wanted lopping and Horniblow was making to lop it. Williams walked along with him and saw the beginning of the operation and as he watched the thought came to him of the amount of work and knowledge there was in the business of keeping an estate.

Horniblow's words, few and far between, gave him some little idea on the subject of tree keeping. The time of the year necessary for doing so and so and the necessity for watchfulness, for trees are like children and require to be looked after nearly as much.

He walked away from the herb garden and found the old archery ground set in the woods to the west of the house.

The amazing thing about Compton was the way in which the turn of a foot so to speak, landed one now and then into a totally new environment.

Nothing could be more apart than the herb garden

locality and this green silent ride chanted across by the birds in summer, scampered across by the squirrels and haunted by fancies for the imaginative gazer.

Williams stood looking at this place where the bow men once practiced. Then he turned on his heel and came back to the house.

CHAPTER II

LORD TREVESSA was just down. He had only obtained two hours sleep but it had been sound, and now newly shaved and seated at the writing table in the library window he was dashing off a note to his secretary in London, stating that he might not return till the morrow.

He was sealing the letter when Williams was shown in.

Lord Trevessa turned in his seat and rose.

He bowed without offering to shake hands.

Williams, the door shut, advanced towards his Lordship, then halted at a little distance with his hand on a chair-back. He had made up his mind. At least his mind had made itself up assisted by Compton.

Williams, though not "one of us," was a good deal of a gentleman, even more important he was a man. For the last couple of hours he had been running the gauntlet.

Things had been talking to him most impudently about himself and his daughter and his position in the world and his position here as a person not wanted. He was in that state of irritation that he could have kicked Compton.

"Thank you, my lord," said Williams in reply to a question of the other. "I have had some sleep, but it has been a trying time and I am still feeling the effects of it. But I'm not too tired to say what I want on the subject which we discussed together last night. What I'm going to say is short enough. I think, my lord, I was precipitate."

"Ah!" said Lord Trevessa.

"I was a bit carried away, you see," said the other, "also I was angry—that was natural I think."

"Undoubtedly you had some cause for showing temper," acceded the nobleman, "but——"

"A moment, yes, as you say I had some cause for showing temper. To discover the girl I had lost for so many years in the position in which I found my child, well, that was enough to make any father show his teeth, but it seems to me I did something else. To be quite frank I want to say that I think I pushed you unduly—took advantage without meaning to do so of the position to force your hand to an agreement that my daughter should marry your ward."

"Well, to be honest——" said Lord Trevessa, greatly relieved and greatly wondering.

"For heaven's sake don't be that," laughed Williams, "or you may be telling me truths that would make me quarrel with you. But I'll be honest. We aren't the same as you and that's the fact. I'm a man of the middle classes. My father was an architect, my mother had been a clergyman's daughter—quite respectable people, but middle class and not quite the top layer either. Then I had misfortunes and married, and then I went abroad. I have made a very big fortune and made it quick, but I made it honestly—at least as honestly as a man can make anything in business. That's just what I am and my daughter is the same as me—Well, now you see it's this way. I feel I've forced my way in here; as a matter of fact I was pushed by events, but that does not alter the fact that I'm not wanted here."

"My dear sir," said Lord Trevessa, who had been expanding under the words of the other and who was newly affected by his manner, also by his personality and face that somehow showed up much better in the broad light of day.

"I know," cut in Williams, stopping the other, "you are a gentleman and you would say I was quite welcome and all that, but I know different. I'm no more welcome than a wallaby would be in a drawing room. It's a natural fact and there's no use denying it. You belong to the

aristocracy and I don't and nothing would ever put me there. Moreover, I don't want to get there. I'm proud of my life and my work and my title which is just a label they have stuck on me in recognition of my work—you see exactly what I mean when I say I'm not proud of my position as a man who would ally himself by force to an old family. I want to quit."

Williams during this speech had shown little of the pomposity and verbosity that usually marked his solemn undertakings in oratory, and Shutters in his reply curiously enough showed the same thing.

"You mean," said he, "that you do not wish to force a marriage between your daughter and my nephew."

"Yes," said Williams, "that's just it."

"Well," said Shutters, "I don't want to contradict you when you draw the line between the classes and when you say here is one set, here is another. That is so, and in my experience I have found it far better for the line to be adhered to—however, put all that aside. I feel, sir, from what you say, that I am dealing with an honourable man and I would shake hands with you and we might say good-day and be quit of an unpleasant business were it not that we are not alone in it. There is the boy."

"Yes?"

"Well, if he does not fall in with our views that an end should be put to this er—embroglio——"

"In other words if he refuses to give up my daughter."

"Yes, precisely."

"To tell you the truth," said Williams, "I had never quite thought of him doing that—the thing that's been urging me is the feeling that I'm not wanted here and that Eileen is not wanted here, and the feeling that I pushed matters with you last night a bit beyond the limit. I wasn't thinking of the boy—or of her. It's not only a question of him sticking to her, but of her sticking to him—her happiness. I don't bother about the boy—naturally—"

"But I do," said the unfortunate nobleman. "I assure

you, Sir Arthur, that I am most seriously troubled and perplexed about him. If I had known, I would never have taken on the responsibility of guardianship. I ought to have indeed guessed. His father, Squire Spence, used to boast and laugh about his pranks. He set fire to his first school and nearly burnt the mistress, he beat a gipsy boy of his own age in such a manner that the unfortunate had to be taken to the county hospital, he did this and that, never was there such a boy. And indeed that is the truth."

"Oh, I reckon he'll grow out of that," said Williams.

"Yes, but he hasn't grown out of it yet," replied Trevessa. "Sir Arthur, I have been thinking——"

"Yes?"

"Last night you suggested taking the boy off to the colonies. Well, I've been thinking just this. The boy is quite determined to marry this—your daughter. If he goes to the other side of the world the distance will not shake the determination."

"I should hope not," said Williams.

"Why!" cried Lord Trevessa, "you told me just now you were entirely with me in my opinion that this marriage ought to be prevented—or at least that class barriers ought to be observed."

"I declare to goodness I don't know if I'm standing on my head or my heels," said Williams. "I don't care a button whether he marries her or not and still I'm not going to have him drop her—that's how it is——"

"Precisely," said Trevessa, rather testily, "and that being so, the fact remains unalterable that you are perhaps not forcing this marriage, but that you are all the same making it certain unless your daughter draws out of it on her own account or unless Patrick breaks it off——"

"I'd break his head if he did!"

Lord Trevessa moved his hands.

"There you are! Now, seeing things are like this, it appears to me this morning on coolly reviewing the whole matter that to take the boy off to Australia or wherever it

is to show him the world and make a man of him may be all very well in theory, but that in practice seeing he has an estate which he will have to manage it would be better for you to stay in England and keep an eye on your daughter, and give Patrick a free rein. In short," said Lord Trevessa, coming to his point, "why not buy an estate in England and settle down here?"

Williams pursed his lips.

"I have thought of that before," said he, "Out there in Australia looking at the houses in *Country Life*, and papers like that, I have often thought, 'Why not buy one?' and then put the matter by. The bother is to me now that I have seen Compton."

"Seen Compton?"

"Yes, this place has made me feel out of it, a stranger. If I were to buy one of the old English places, it would be the same. I could never make a home of it."

"I am not so sure of that," said Trevessa, "the fact of property ownership changes the faces of things; after all most of our old houses have not come down in direct lines of succession. Thorpe Madley, for instance, has changed hands twice in its history and the last owners were brewers to begin with."

"Well, maybe so," said Williams, "but if the house accepted me, it's ten to one that the County wouldn't. I've read about that sort of thing, and I seem to feel it in the air in England."

"I assure you," said the nobleman, "that all that is very much a matter of the personal touch. If a man is fond of sport and a good fellow, he may find it quite easy to get on with the County if he is properly backed. It mostly depends on him."

"Would you back me?" asked Williams.

His Lordship gave a little intake of the breath at this sudden and ruthless question, however the blessed word "Colonial" covered it.

"I should be delighted to do anything in my power to

make your stay in England comfortable," said he, "or rather I should say to make your home in England one that would attract you permanently to our country. If you were to buy for instance, such a house as Haydocks—"

"Where's that?" cut in the other.

Trevessa reined up like a horse to a twitched martingale, Williams he quite saw had many good qualities, but he spoiled himself by his habit of cutting one off suddenly as one was speaking. However he went on:

"Haydocks is in Hampshire, its lands adjoin these. It belonged to the Lestranges, and it came to them from the D'Aths somewhere in the time of William and Mary. You can see their woods from the top windows here and the house is only some three miles from this."

"I'd like to see it," said Williams.

"Why not," replied his lordship.

In mentioning Haydocks, he had not thought of Williams in connection with it, his tongue, as hinted before in the course of this narrative, was not his strongest point and he had let it run on. But now it suddenly seemed to him that it would be an excellent idea if some very rich man were to take up his quarters at Haydocks, a place he had only once seen some ten years before, but which he had heard was falling into disrepair.

Houses like that do harm to a county, they are like rotten apples in a barrel.

Yes, really, if Williams were to settle down there and keep an eye on Pat, he would benefit not only the County but Lord Trevessa.

"Yes," said Williams, again rising from the chair where he had been sitting and walking to the window. "I'd like to see it. I could run over in the car. (He had kept on the London car after 'phoning to the garage.) Would you care to come with me?"

Lord Trevessa rose.

"Yes," he said, "I shall be glad to go with you. I expect there is a caretaker in the house, at all events we

can see the gardens and grounds which I am told are quite good, though of course fallen away a bit owing to the house being empty. I will ring for Pat to come with us."

But no Pat could be found, so the two men when the car came round had to go off on their visit to Haydocks alone.

CHAPTER III

PAT, that morning, had awakened from a three hours' sleep and not bothering much about dressing had slipped out of the house on a visit to the Duffields.

He wanted to tell them all about the business of the night before. Besides Scunner would be anxious for news.

He met Scunner in the lane.

"Hullo!" said Farmer Duffield.

"Hullo!" said Pat. "Scun, it's all right. Where you going?"

"What's been happening?" asked Mr. Duffield. He was in no very good temper; he had scarcely slept a wink disturbed in his mind by that crowd in the motor car who had come in search of Eileen and also by Mrs. Duffield tossing by his side.

"What's been happening? They came to our place rakin' the missis out of bed at two in the morning and then drove off to the big house after you and her. What's been happenin'?"

"I'm blessed if I know," said Pat. "I got her away all right and they chased me in a big car and I took the Bunbury turning and bogged Jane in the field beyond the green and broke her axle, and the chap that was chasing me was her father all the time. Eileen's father—and it's all turning out all right, there's going to be no bother."

"Come on," said Duffield. He led the way to the farm where breakfast was being prepared and whilst the meal was in progress Pat told everything he knew. How he had been taking Eileen off to Scotland, how they had broken down, been chased, captured and then——

"And aren't you going to marry her?" asked Mrs. D.

"Yes, some time," said Pat, "they don't mind, but it can't be yet."

"It oughtn't never to have been in my opinion," broke out Mrs. Duff, suddenly going back on a lot of what she had thought and said on the subject of Pat and Eileen. "It's just as if the light had come to me when I say it. It was different when she was a lone orphan with no bag and baggage tied to her—pore thing. Yes, it was different—you might have picked her up like a lamb and no trouble. But now she's got a father from Australia and lord knows what—it's not the same."

"What's the woman getting at?" asked Scunner of the kitchen clock. "What's the differ of a father to her?"

"You'll see," said Mrs. Duffield, "him comin' from Australia and leavin' his pore child all these years, that's not the sorter man to be tied to Master Pat and the Family. If she'd been alone on the world as she was, things wouldn't have been so bad. I never did hold with Master Pat comin' round her as you very well know, but there you are, they were young things and there was no harm, but I never did think of a father."

They were talking as though Pat were miles away. In fact he was—at least he wasn't bothering about what they said, he was used to being discussed before his face, also he was busy digging great whole strawberries out of the jam-pot which Mrs. D. had fetched from a cupboard.

The Eileen question was settled for Pat. The adventure of running away with her the second time had finished it. He had succeeded. Eileen was not going to be taken away from him—or only for purposes of education—there was nothing more to be done for the present, and as the present with Pat had always had to be filled, other things were rushing in.

"It's all very well you talkin'," said Duffield, "saying you never did hold with him comin' round her. Why who was for keepin' her here at the first go off?"

"Well you may ask that, you that brought her—pore lamb——"

"Pore lamb! You call her that and then you go cuttin' her throat before him."

"Who's cuttin' whose throat?"

"Talkin' about her father."

"Oh, shut up," said Pat, "you two remind me of old Skrines and his wife, always barging at one another. Eileen's all right now, and he's not a bad chap and anyhow—Scun."

"What?"

"D'you know they're starting a pack of beagles at Bunbury?"

"Who told you that?"

"Fellow last night. I was sitting on the running board of the car whilst they were jawing in the pub when a cottager chap roused up by the noise we'd been making came out and began to clack with the chauffeur. He told us a chap called Tyrell had come to live at Bunbury and was starting a pack of beagles."

"Tyrell," said Scunner, "that's the chap that bought Trenchards, the big house, got an uncommon fine daughter. Good family and lots of money. I was talkin' to Perch about them—beagles he's starting?"

"That's what the chap said."

"Well, he might be doing worse," said Scunner.

Later when Pat had taken his departure, Mrs. Duff spoke meditatively over the clearing away of the breakfast things.

"He's thinking more of those beagles than he's thinking of that girl. Well, I hope it will all come out for the best for her."

"Oh, she's all right," said Scunner.

"I'm not so sure of that," said Mrs. Duff, "not if he's made her care for him."

"He'd never harm her."

"Lord bless the man, who's talkin' of harmin' her!

Master Pat's a gentleman. I'm not thinking he'd do any wrong to her except forgetting her."

"How do you mean, forgetting her?"

"How do I mean any sensible thing I've been saying—I mean if he's going cold on her and she keeping warm to him that's the bitterest thing that can come to any woman."

"He was hot enough after her yesterday," said Scunner, greasing his boots.

"Yes, he was hot enough after her yesterday because they were all up against him to separate her from him, but now things have gone different, it's afraid I am that things will be different. You don't know Master Pat, or you wouldn't ask. It was always the way with him, cross him or hold a thing from him was like holding a bone from a terrier—give it to him and he wouldn't likely bother about it. Now they've shoved her into his arms, it's maybe he'll drop her."

"And if he did, where's the bother, seeing you were saying yourself only a minute ago that her father wasn't fit to be tied to the family."

"I'm thinking of her, not her father," said Mrs. Duff, "and now off with you and your boots and leave me to my kitchen. I've got the pastry to make and haven't got the time to be talking all day."

Duffield went off with a grin, but it was only on his face.

Well he knew the terrible logicality of the illogicality of Mrs. Duff, an attribute he had tried to express sometimes to friends and neighbours in figurative language. "She can see through a brick wall and tell you what you're thinkin' about on the other side of it," and so forth.

All the same and however that might be, it is certain that Pat had so little forgotten Eileen that, leaving the Duffields and returning to the Big House, his first thought was to inquire after her and see if she were down yet.

Huddled in a shawl belonging to the landlord's wife of the "Silent Woman" and seated by her father last night

on the return journey to Compton, she had seemed like a half-dazed thing—but she would be all right this morning.

In fact as he came along up by the house front, there she was at a window, just up evidently and just dressed.

He nodded to her and waved his hand and she smiled down at him, a wan not too assured smile as though behind it and existing despite Love, there lay in her mind a vague dread that he might run away with her again.

"Eileen, open the window!" cried Pat.

He made movements indicating the pushing up of a sash and she understood and next minute was leaning out into the mild autumn day and talking to him.

She was all right, she said. Her father had told her last night he was going to take her to London in the train. "I'm to get clothes," said Eileen. "Pat—dear Pat——"

She hung silent and a bird somewhere beyond the roof, put in its voice.

"What do you want clothes for?" said Pat. "Why can't you get them here—how long will you be up there getting clothes?"

Eileen didn't know.

Pat scratched the gravel with the toe of his boot.

Then he told her about the beagles at Bunbury and how across the fields it was only three miles to Bunbury, whereas it was seven or eight by the road.

"It's twice the fun of the hounds," said he, "you run after them and the nearest meet of the hounds is Market Cross. I've never ridden to the hounds, there's only the old carriage horses.—Are you any good at running? Anyhow you can come and look on?—Who's that?"

It was Mrs. Pounce behind Eileen telling her she would get her death of cold at the open window. The window was shut and Pat, turning, made off for the stables.

Here he found Larry, who was in the harness room.

"So they cocht you," said Larry.

"No, they didn't," said Pat. "At least they wouldn't only the damned old car got bogged."

He gave a graphic description of the chase and the death and last moments of Jane.

"And lucky for you she did," said Larry. "She'd never have tuck you to Scotland. She'd have gone on the road and left you stranded high and dry where'd you have been, you and the geril? Sure, Masther Pat, it's mad you were."

"Whach you mean?"

"I'm meanin' what I'm sayin', off to be married with a geril like that. I'm not sayin' anything against her, she's a nice little thing—but sure where's the sense in it?"

"The sense in what?"

"Goin' off like that——"

"Well, they were going to take her away, weren't they, and what do you mean talking like that now—you never said a word last night and you gave me that letter to your brother——"

"Oh him! I did sure enough, but I knew he'd have turned you back. It was clane wild goose madness was on you and there's no use talkin' to a man when he's like that or when he has drink taken. It's better to let them run and fetch up of themselves. So that was her father, the big chap with the nose. I was talkin' to him this morning and he looking round the stables and, a fine figure of a man and rowlin' in money the chauffeur tells me—but sure he's not one of the quality."

"What do you mean?"

"Faith, it's not easy to put your finger on it, but it's just there. The ould Squire would come into the yard in a shootin' coat with the elbows out, but you could tell with a sideglance the great gentleman he was; but this chap, he looked all right and he was dressed all right with a big gowld watch chain, but he was different from the others."

"What others?"

"Well, it's the ould quality I was talkin' of. The new quality is different. You remember that big wine merchant man that races horses that come down to see the old Squire, his name was on all the whisky bottles in the country

and he'd got a way with him as if the town belonged to him, but he couldn't get rid of the whisky bottles. They were stickin' out of his pocket. It's trade that does it. There was a political chap down here preachin' and saying that trade follows the flag—faith and it follows a man too——

"I wouldn't be doing it, Masther Pat," suddenly broke out Larry after a moment's pause, and thumbnail scratching on the lid of the old bureau that was once a corn bin.

"Doing what?"

"Hitchin' up with that chap. There, you have me now. When you hitch with a geril, you hitch with her rilatives. I remember me ould mother sayin' that. It was young O'Brien that went and married into the Connolly lot, and it's not the geril, says she, but his marryin' the crowd, the a'nts and uncles and ould Terrence Connolly who was japanned after his fight with Black Slane and's been kickin' up hell's shines ever after in the village——"

"Oh, go and stick your head in a bag," said Pat. He was suddenly angry, not so much with Larry as with something new that was trying to push Eileen away from him. Mrs. Duff had begun the business—they were all against Williams, this big man that had suddenly broken into his environment.

Frankly, Pat though he had learned to respect and fear Williams in that short interview of last night held no brief for him. He was Eileen's father—that was all.

And now it seemed to him that Eileen wasn't quite what she had been yesterday when she was a creature quite by herself in the world, before this big strange man had suddenly attached himself to her like a tumour.

It was strange that Lord Trevessa had come to accept or partly accept Williams, whilst these common people like Mrs. Duff and Larry were against him—not so strange perhaps when one remembers that Mrs. Duff and Larry were not burdened by the guardianship of Pat, not perplexed by the tangle into which he had tied himself with

the " geril," not pillars of the Conservative Party advanced in life and craving for peace and freedom from alarums and the fear of excursions such as his unfortunate lordship had been dragged into the night before, not wise in the sophistry of the modern London world that places wealth on an equality with birth—ay, even sometimes above it.

" Well, there you are," said Larry. " I'll stick me head in a bag right enough and you can go your own ways. But I've been forgettin' to tell you—the badger's out."

" Out ! "

" He bit his way through the hutch, he got into the chicken yard and made hay with them Cochin China pullets and thrailed off God knows where. We chased him with the dogs down to the withys and lost the s'int."

Pat raged. You couldn't leave a thing for a moment but it was gone ! It had been let out by some fool. Larry showed the hutch.

Well, they must have forgot to feed it, or it wouldn't have broken out like that.

" I fed him myself," cried Larry, " over-stuffed he was and full of fight—not feed him Who'd leave an animal widout its food ! "

They parted on a strained note, but Pat forgot badger and Larry when he reached the house front and saw Miss Portman getting into the hired taxi from Mamsbury. She wasn't waiting even for luncheon, it was more than defeat, it was utter rout.

CHAPTER IV

WILLIAMS and Lord Trevessa returned from their inspection of Haydocks before luncheon.

You can see Haydocks miles away on the gentle slope where it stands as it stood three hundred years ago, presiding over its gardens, guarded by its yews. There is a yew parlour at Haydocks unlike anything else in the world except perhaps that at Owl Pen, and to right of the great yeoman-yews that stand in a double line guarding the ascent to the house stands a grandfather thirty feet round.

Haydocks with its twisted chimneys and grey lichened walls and oriel windows has in some lights that delicacy of appearance we associate with lace, in some lights the windows take colour or fire and the whole front has a fragile appearance and a surface chatoyancy impossible to imagine unless seen.

The gardens, despite the fact that the place had been untenanted for several years, were fairly well kept up and Williams had scarcely walked round them when his mind was made up.

He would buy the place unless the price was absolutely exorbitant. He told Lord Trevessa so and they returned to luncheon at Compton and it was after luncheon that Pat was asked to step into the library and have a chat with his father-in-law designate.

"I'm going up to town at four o'clock," said Sir Arthur. "We are—I am also giving Lord Trevessa a lift in the car, too, so I just thought I'd have a word with you, Pat."

The name from Williams's lips struck the boy strangely, he did not resent it, but it seemed queer that a stranger should speak to him familiarly like that. One's Christian

name, especially in its abbreviated form, is a sort of private property only to be shared with intimates. Of course Williams as the father of Eileen had a right to consider himself on intimate terms with the Spences—all the same it made Pat feel queer to hear his name spoken like that.

"Yes, sir," said Pat, with a rising inflection.

"I'm going to buy Haydocks," said Williams, "and I hope to make it my permanent home in England. It's a fine old place and it will be all the finer for a bit done to it. I'll take up residence there pretty soon to try it out before the winter is over, but what I'm coming to is Eileen.

"You care for Eileen and she cares for you, but what I want just to say to you is that you are both very young and that you have both known each other for only a very short time." He spoke good-naturedly, half jocularly, but—it was like an elephant trampling on Venetian glass, smashing all sorts of delicate things. Last night, talking man to man it was different, but this speaking down as if from age to youth, this cheapening of everything—ugh!

Pat flushed.

"Sit down," said Williams, "we can talk easier sitting down."

Pat sat down.

To be invited to sit down in his own house seemed strange—it was his youth, he was only a boy and Williams was a man, also Williams was the father of Eileen.

"I'm taking Eileen up to town with me to-day," went on Williams, "she wants clothes and all sorts of things. Those are easily bought, but there are things one can't buy that are all the same essential to happiness and that something that makes for unity between two people."

"What's he getting at now?" thought Pat, who was unaware of Williams's failing as regards verbosity.

"And that something," went on the other, "has to do with education as well as position. I have been talking to your uncle, Lord Trevessa, and he quite agrees with me that it is necessary that Eileen should receive some tuition

and be allowed to find herself mentally under the tutelage of some experienced person. Your uncle suggests Buckhurst School—that is as maybe. I am only pointing out to you the necessity that for at least a year and until Eileen has been able to form her mind, you should both not meet much. Of course you can write and you can meet her in the holidays at my house—after that we will see."

The fact that it would be absurd for these two to marry for another three or four years was not insisted on by Williams, but it was there in his mind.

"Yes, sir," said Pat.

Williams had expected opposition. He was rather astonished by this acquiescence and for a moment suspicious.

But Pat was not holding back anything. He was demagnetized, he was depressed. Eileen was being pushed away from him by influences which she had brought about her. In Pat's mind a grudge was arising against Williams, a dislike, an antagonism.

Williams was talking to him as an elder, he had never met this person till last night (forgive him, Eileen), and yet he was taking on the manner of a guardian, he was coming to live in Hampshire at Haydocks and (now Mrs. Duff and Larry rose like cockchafers and whirred about in Pat's mind) he wasn't quite "It."

Of all mortals Pat was perhaps the least snobbish, all things considered, but the deadly poison inserted by Mrs. Duff and Larry in his mind was working now and all the more potently because it was the truth.

Pat had come from people who had learned from long experience the noxiousness of the Climber whose maxim is "first servile, then familiar, then impudent." Williams wasn't servile, but he was familiar—and he wasn't It.

Yes, and he was here for good, taking Haydocks and coming over to Compton to poke his nose into things. Why he was already talking like a relative.

All this had come from Eileen—it was like black magic.

"After that we will see," went on Williams. "I believe I may ask you to concur in this view of things and not do anything foolish to upset it."

"Oh, I'm not going to do anything," said Pat listlessly.

"I take your word for that," said the other. "You are a gentleman, and between gentlemen there is no necessity for a written contract nor an oath. Well, that's settled, and when I come down for the furnishing and settling up of Haydocks, I hope to see a lot of you."

Now how did he convey to Pat that his real meaning was, "I hope to get to know you well and to know your *character* and to test it and see if it's good enough to carry my daughter on its back?"

By some little quick look of the eye?—Heaven knows! but he did.

"Damn your impudence," thought Pat.

The thing locked of a sudden—he disliked Williams. Disliked him with a cold, curious, distasteful dislike. He was a spoiler, he would spoil Compton if he came around, he was an incubus, he was a wet day. Shutters beside him was warm and almost lovable. He was undesirable and he was tied to Pat.

Pat had pulled him down on top of himself as he was searching the skies for a means of escape with Eileen—and he would never be got rid of. He had come for ever.

Pat could have burst into tears. That was how it took him all of a sudden, but he held himself together and said nothing.

Williams thought him dull in response to his words, "wants brightening up socially," he said to himself.

He finally dished the whole business and put a cover on by picking up a packet of gaspers Pat had pulled from his pocket with his handkerchief and which fell on the floor, for all to see.

"Do you use these things?" said Williams. "Don't. Take an old stager's advice—don't. The cigarette habit

has hit more men than the drink habit, it spoils efficiency, makes for slackness and gives you nothing in return."

He placed his hand in a fatherly manner on Pat's shoulder.

Do you *use* these *things!* The cigarette *habit!* Ugh!

The conference broke up.

It was four o'clock when, the car at the door, Pat said a last word to Eileen in the library where they were left by themselves for a moment.

"You'll have a jolly time," said Pat, "wish I was going. And I'll write to you every day and you'll write to me—it's only for a bit, Eileen. I'll see you soon—There!"

"Oh, Pat," cried Eileen suddenly breaking off from kissing him and flinging her thin arms round his neck, "Dear Pat—you won't ever not love me! Say it again."

It was the sound of the car going down the avenue that made Pat blubber. Blub like a two-year-old. He was in the library and then came a voice from outside.

"Where's Masther Pat?"

"What you want him for?"

"The ould badger's been found, away beyant the withies and I've got him hutched again."

Pat dried his tears and blew his nose and came out.

CHAPTER V

NEXT morning it was that he found himself possessed of a new freedom. Mr. Adams was all but gone, in fact he was sailing from Southampton the day after to-morrow, and Mr. Smith, the vicar of Mamsbury with whom it had been arranged that he should come over every day to "read" with Pat, had not taken up his new duties.

Lord Trevessa was gone, Williams, Eileen—the whole morning lay before him to do what he pleased with, and thinking of nothing better he decided to go over across the fields to Bunbury and look at the remains of Jane. See if it were possible to do anything with her. She was a loss. There was nothing now except the old two wheeled trap in the stable to get about with and a push bicycle, he had not had time to represent all this to Lord Trevessa and if he had it is doubtful if his lordship would have done anything, at all events yet. Motorless, Pat was much safer than when endowed with motion.

He'd have to walk three miles across the fields, or push bike nearly seven along the roads; he chose the fields.

The fine weather still held, a blue sky with flocks of fleecy white clouds roofed the world, and the air was warm with a breath from the South. It was like a spring day.

The brown hedges were alive with the twittering of birds and the clapping of farm doors came on the wind that danced the washing on the clothes lines and blew the feathers of the crooning and scratching hens and wafted the blue smoke of the weed-burning piles bringing to the wanderer a perfume more delicious than the scents of Araby.

Duffields' farm left behind, he came across Plummers meadow which leads to the lane dividing Plummers farm from Jackmans to the north.

Every field had a name, and every name was a history or was part of a history extending back to the Conquest.

Here away from the woods was a different world containing a different people.

At the stile leading across Blathornes farm he met Daddy Ambrose.

Considering the fact that Mr. Ambrose had seen him off to be married only a short time before, the former's want of surprise at this sudden meeting might have been considered strange—did not one know the truth.

The old gentleman had been at his usual work of unsetting snares, his conscience was heavy with guilt, and to the information that Eileen had suddenly found her father and that everything was all right he replied by a rapid succession of nods.

"Going dotty," thought Pat. He didn't wait for the other to find voice but struck across Blathornes, the path taking him into the road that ended in Bunbury Village.

This morning clothes were drying on the clothes lines of the cottages, an old horse was grazing on the village green sharing the scanty pasturage with a duck and a goat, the Silent Woman creaked on her sign board, but sign of living human being there was none.

Pat crossed the green and found the field where Jane had come to grief.

There she was, sure enough, with her bonnet still half stuck in the bog patch. The villagers had left her severely alone. She looked as though she had made a nose dive from the sky, and Pat as he walked round her could scarcely believe, so horrible had death made her seem, that this was the once sprightly Jane. It was like the Marquis de Monpavon when they found him with his throat cut in the bath—People failed to recognise him.

Whilst he was standing taking a last look at the departed the yap of a dog made him turn his head.

A girl and a fox terrier had broken from the wood, they were running. The girl seemed chasing the dog and the dog chasing the girl. She had a walking stick in her hand. She was a lady, she didn't look more than fifteen or so and she was coming right across the meadow towards him—walking now.

Pat resumed his contemplation of the defunct. Who was this confounded girl? Where did she come from? Where was she going? He put his hands in his pockets and began to walk slowly round Jane looking at her with his head on one side as though contemplating her condition. He felt selfconscious and shy all alone there in the field with this stranger coming towards him. He waited for her to pass on. But she didn't.

She stopped.

"Where did this awful old car come from?" asked she addressing Pat. "Has there been an accident?"

Pat looked at her.

"It's mine," said he. "Yes, she broke down. Got bogged."

Shyness had fled. It was as though Jane had introduced them.

"Sorry," said the girl. "Didn't know it was yours——"

She seemed ashamed of her disparagement of Jane and was on the point of walking on when Pat whose swift and instinctive brain had been putting two and two together stopped her:

"I say, is your name Tyrrel?"

"Yes," she replied. "How do you know?"

"I didn't, only Mrs. Duff. I mean I heard from a man here that you were starting beagles."

"Father is."

"My name's Spence. I live over at Compton."

"Are you Mr. Spence of Compton?"

"Yes."

"Oh! We've only just come here, we've taken a house."

"I know," said Pat. "At least, I was told so, and then I heard you were starting a pack of beagles."

"Do you like dogs?"

"Love them—only I haven't got one just now. I had one, rough-haired—she got down a rabbit hole and we couldn't get her out in time. Larry—one of our men found where she was but it was too late——"

They had turned away from Jane and were walking towards the gateway.

"I say," said Pat, breaking away from the painful subject of the wirehaired. "My people ought to have called on your people—but there's only Uncle, and he lives in London." The beagles were running in his head.

"Oh, that's all right," said Miss Tyrrel. "All sorts of people have been calling on us and it's such a nuisance having to pay all their visits back. It's the worst thing in coming to a new place—but don't bother about that. Come over some day, father would be only too pleased, and if you'd care to come to the first meet of the beagles it's next Tuesday."

"I'll be there," said Pat. "What time?"

"Ten, at the house. There's an old hound's kennel we're using for the dogs. They're a new pack, you'll like them, I think."

"I'll come."

They parted at the gateway and Pat took his way home in good spirits.

She was a pale-faced girl with grey serious eyes and an assured manner and it was as easy to talk to her as to talk to a man. She didn't seem a girl at all. Good sort. He wished he'd told her about the badger.

The path he took on his homeward way struck the lane leading by Duffields, and here he met Parson Smith of Mamsbury, the gentleman who was to come over and read with him taking Mr. Adams' place.

Parson Smith (Beaumont Smith was his full name)

belonged to that rare and fading out type of the country clergy which was in full bloom in the early Victorian and late Georgian eras, fond of his glass but never exceeding, good to the poor, poor in his sermons, riding to hounds when he got the chance, red faced, portly and with a personality. But he was also a scholar with a love of the classics, and as his income was under five hundred a year and his parish gave him little work, he was glad enough to add to his stipend by putting in a couple of hours a day at Compton. Besides he liked Pat.

He was riding a pad nag and he pulled up at the sight of the other and they talked.

"Beagles on Tuesday," said the Parson. "Well, I won't be taking on duty with you till Wednesday. I don't want to stop your fun, Pat, and any day you want to go to a meet of the hounds or so on, why I'll just come and read with you in the evening. But, mind you, whether or no, it's two hours a day you must have, for I've got my duty to perform to your uncle as well as to yourself. That's a bargain isn't it?"

"Yes sir," said Pat.

It was a good beginning and promised well for a good time and quiet life for both parties in the future.

CHAPTER VI

"MY dear Eileen," wrote Pat. "I got your letter with your Pater's. I'd rather it was you than me going to all those clothes shops. It's raining like mad to-day, but I got out yesterday with the beagles, Mr. Tyrrel's beagles, Miss Tyrrel ran with them too. Mr. Smith has just gone, he's come to coach me instead of Mr. Adams who is leaving to-morrow for Southampton—"

Pat paused, he was writing in the library. This was his second letter to Eileen and it was partly in answer to one from her written from the Savoy Hotel.

Poor Eileen. Very few fairy-tale Princesses have gone through happenings equal to hers, and to judge from what was written between the lines of the scrawl that reached Pat, there were happier fates than hers. To suddenly find a father is not to suddenly find love for him, respect, fear, but not love, though heaven knows Williams was doing his best.

"He is very, very kind and I am very, very unhappy because I am away from you, Pat." That was the hidden writing between the lines of Eileen's letter, a letter in which the t's were like the l's and the m's like the w's.

But he was no good at reading hidden writing. To tell the truth of the matter, a letter to him was a thing that had to be answered when read, un-literary to the ends of his finger-nails the fact that it had to be read at all was an additional burden—If he only could have shouted to Eileen across the miles that separated them——!

Letters held his impetuous nature up just as a hedge holds a horse. Telephoning would have been just as bad. He never could stand the telephone. It had the curious

property of being able to inspire him with irritation sometimes amounting to rage. You would have understood could you have heard him:

"Are you there, hi, are you there—then why can't you answer—a hundred and six Mamsbury. What are you saying? I can't hear you. Yes, one ought six—what else did you think it was?"

Only the remembrance that he was talking to a telephone girl and not a man kept him in check.

Letter writing was not only as bad but a bit worse, for you had to spell your words as well as your numbers—the whole thing was a hateful hold up of the mind—of a mind that was as direct as the mind of a savage, as impetuous as a thoroughbred—and absolutely destitute of the faculty for weaving nothings into words.

"I'm awfully sorry he's going," went on Pat turning the page. "I told you about the badger in my last letter, didn't I? Well, he's all right. He hasn't tried to get out again and anyhow I've had sheet zinc nailed all round the hutch so if he gets through the wood his old nose will come up against the zinc. I have to stop now for it's just dinner time—Yours ever, Pat."

He meant to say ever so much more than that. In these first letters, his mind cleared of beagles and badgers and all the exciting things of the day surged forth towards Eileen, yet, as I have said, he was held up by the difficulty of speaking to her at all with a pen. He wrote the word "Love" once and had to rewrite the letter, it looked so rotten.

But after a month or so, getting on towards Christmas when he took up his pen to write to Eileen (she was now at Buckhurst being turned into a young lady) he began to find it easier.

Writing once a week there was always enough stuff to write about. The Tyrrels had turned out top-hole and Mr. Tyrrel had a collection of guns—you should see them. He has one flint lock double barrelled fowling piece over a

hundred years old, and it looks just as if it had been made yesterday, nothing heavy or clumsy about it, and round each barrel just at the breech there's a thin line of gold let into the metal.

That was a long letter, for it had to tell of a day's pheasant shooting at the Tyrrels, and of the fact that her father was coming in to Haydocks—all the furniture sent by "Maples" was in and it would be jolly at Christmas because she would be there.

In fact Williams with the whip of urgency and the gold of Australia had patched Haydocks roof, re-tiled the long walk, mended the stairs and bedroom ceilings and got the furniture (genuine antique, the most of it) in its place before in the old days the plasterers would have finished.

People called on him almost before he was in, for he was Money, and Lord Trevessa had written to Howard Nokes who was a big person in the county recommending the newcomer, and there were going to be gay times at Christmas, but Pat, though he wrote cheerfully on the matter to Eileen, did not look forward to the gaiety.

When Williams came bustling over to Compton in his Rolls Royce Pat met him civilly enough but without enthusiasm. Williams had not only been poisoned for Pat in some curious subtle way by Larry and Mrs. Duff but also he had committed the crime of being a stranger, yet at the same time an Elder in Authority.

He never argued the thing out in his own mind as far as that, he only knew that he disliked Williams, but had to stand him over this Christmas business because of Eileen—However God disposes.

It was on the first of December that Williams came over to Compton with the news that there would be no Christmas party. There was a crisis in the Wool business or the Sheep business or something, and he had to leave for Australia in ten days.

"And as things are like that," said Williams, "you can come up to town for a few days to see Eileen before I go.

I have arranged with the head mistress at Buckhurst that she is to stay there during the holidays, but she can come up for a day or two and we can go about together."

They did, and Williams entertained them at the Savoy for three days. Pat was astonished at the change in the girl that had taken place in a few weeks; not only was it a question of dress—she was different in herself, always shy she showed to him now a new sort of shyness. He felt as if something had come between them, as though she had frozen towards him, she wasn't the same Eileen, she didn't care for him——

He could not tell that this strange new manner was not herself, that it was born of the big man who had suddenly become her father, the big hotel that half frightened her, Mrs. Taplow of Buckhurst and the girls of the school into which she had been flung like a kitten into a bucket of water. He could not tell that she had been happier with the Skrines than here, and just as an insect changes its colour to the colour of the leaf it is on, so his manner changed to imitate her. At least where she was only reserved and cold seeming he grew grumpy and irritable now and then, and didn't look at her as they were driving in the taxi to see Dear Brutus, and went on in that sort of fashion making her absolutely miserable, till all of a sudden, as at the Matinée where they went to see Berry acting, he would burst out laughing and turn back into his old self—for a while.

But that was no good, it did not draw them any closer together. She could not join in his laughter and high spirits. *He* hadn't weighing on his mind a strange father and a strange schoolmistress and a strange school and strange companions she couldn't understand, girls bursting with health and brutalized by hockey—nice enough girls no doubt, but to her like creatures from another world.

And then he wasn't in love as she was in love. To her the world held Pat and nothing else. He was everything,

everything, everything, and she was separated from him, and now he had grown different.

If Pat had only known !

Yet it wasn't his fault, it was hers—or rather it was the fault of her temperament, her shy and distraught mind so beaten upon by circumstance and pulled hither and thither by events.

If he could only have seen her as she really was, known how she really felt towards him, known of her loneliness and misery in the grand new environment that was enclosing her—it would have broken his heart—at least it would have made him kiss her and hug her and give her the warmth and hope for which she was starving.

They saw her off back to school, and just before the train started Pat forgetting everything got into the first class carriage where she was seated with her bundles and rugs and kissed her explosively and on both cheeks.

A sudden regret at parting from her had seized him. "I'll write to-morrow," cried Pat, as the guard, whistle in mouth, lugged him out of the train, "be sure and write. See you soon."

Her pale little face at the window showed as the train drew out. She was not looking at her father. She leaned out and her hand waved. She was gone.

Pat felt suddenly and violently depressed. As though the coldness between them had suddenly broken like ice, and he had tumbled into the cold, cold water beneath.

He could have run after the train. But that was impossible and he turned away with Williams to go back to the Savoy for his luggage, as he was due to go back to Compton by the afternoon train.

As they drove to the Savoy Williams seemed in no better spirits than his companion.

This father had developed a fondness for his long-lost daughter which he could not inspire in her. He did not know this latter fact. She was a dear quiet little thing, that was enough, he fancied she cared for him just as much

as he cared for her, and the fact that he had to go off to Australia for months and months and leave her here alone depressed him, it also increased his kindness of manner towards his companion.

As a matter of fact the few days in town had drawn them together!—made Pat feel much more kindly to the elder man who had done all he could to give him a good time. Williams was a good sort after all, despite Larry and Mrs. Duff, and in town he had sunk the elderly relative business and despite his objection to cigarettes had treated Pat as a fellow man, not as a youngster. Pat was sorry to part with him and went back to Compton altogether rather depressed.

CHAPTER VII

BUT, bless you! depression was not a disease of the mind to make much headway against a mind so filled with the ozone of life as that of Patrick Spence.

After purging his soul with a long letter to Eileen his horizon cleared, and the day after the sun burst forth in the shape of a letter from Williams.

"I forgot to say," wrote the Wool Man, "that there is a car in the garage at Haydocks, you can use her as much as you want. She'll be spoiling in the garage, anyhow, you can fetch her over to Compton. I've written to my man Peters and he will let you have her."

"Hooray!" cried Pat. He knew her, a two seater with a dickey, grey painted, twenty-five horse power. It was wings!

He rushed out to tell Larry and get Jane's den swept and garnished for the newcomer.

The thought of showing his new prize to Miss Tyrrel, Dora was her other name, was not displeasing. He and she were great friends in a hunting sort of way now, and the beagles were going strong. Dressed in breeches and leggings she could outrun Pat. It seemed scarcely fair, girls taking to breeches, girls are so horribly efficient when they take up men's affairs that it would seem sometimes, for the good of the race, that they ought to be handicapped in some way so that men may not lose heart. However that may be Dora Tyrrel could last out Pat. She was also an excellent shot, he had walked with her through the turnips and seen her at the covert side.

She wasn't exactly a girl, at least not a girl like Eileen,

and the other girls he had seen, heard of, and imagined, yet all the same she attracted him.

Yes, it would please him to show her the car, and having done his work with Mr. Smith and had luncheon, he started to walk over to Haydocks.

It took him an hour going by short cuts, and when he reached the path leading up between the great yews, a threat of rain from a cloud that had let fall only a few drops passed and the grey December day becoming miraculously clear showed the distant woods where the rooks were cawing and the distant hills, hiding Southampton, and a hint of the Solent away to the East; a grey line that said "Remember the Sea."

He found Peters in the stable-yard and Peters showed him the car, promising him to bring it across on the morrow as the engine wanted things done to it. Not much, but just a touch here and there.

Pat wasn't sorry to start off back with this assurance. He didn't care for Haydocks. The place had a name for being haunted—badly haunted in fact, for Roger D'Ath in the reign of Elizabeth had, so the story ran, practised black magic.

There was a cat that came through the wainscoting of the dining room and a calf without a head that was sometimes met at night in the hall, and a duck that flew screeching, screeching round the yard outside the kitchen—all animal ghosts, strange enough, and all sworn to by the people of Haydocks village.

But it wasn't the ghost stories that made Pat dislike Haydocks, it was the place. The black yews had for him a personality, and the house despite its beauty had a leer. Impossible to tell why this impression should have fixed in his mind but so it was.

The Nokes' place over at Burshot was a place to make you shudder if you like. A big blundering old country-house, heavy-looking, ugly, with a moat in which two people had been drowned, and a history that contained two murders,

and an alleged ghost of a baby that squalled at night under the dining room floor; but Burshot to Pat was all right, he did not mind it at all, whereas he did not like Haydocks.

He came back along by Wymans wood which runs like a sword between the Compton Estate and the true New Forest. Getting over the palings dividing the wood from Compton he took his way by a path leading by firs, vast Wellingtonias, then lesser firs smelling delicious in the winter air. A reek of refuse burning came on the slight wind that stirred the fir branches, delicious and calling up all sorts of things, and coming no doubt from the clearing where old Cummings had his cottage.

He left the firs and found beeches where the squirrels were out. They ought to have been hibernating, some enemy was out after them evidently; he noted the fact and continued his way till he came to the long ride. Through the trees on the right showed a blaze. It was the setting sun from which the clouds had cleared for a moment. The sun seemed peeping into the old archery ground of Compton, and there lit by his rays stood an archer.

A tall man stood grasping a six foot bow taking aim at something right ahead, the bow was bent to its full and the feathers of the arrow nearly touched his right ear. He was solid and real and round, then he became flat, then he vanished, all like the blowing out of a couple of candles.

Nothing, only the trees. It had only lasted a second.

Pat had seen him before, several months before the old Squire's death he had seen him, and he had been just the same and just about in the same place. Possibly he was always there like a statue adorning the glade, but only to be seen by some, and by those only sometimes. Just like that terrible blasphemous wine party that was possibly always going on in Sir Stephen's room at Compton and which Pat had surprised one day when he was a child. On those occasions he had been absolutely undisturbed. They had been to his supreme innocence like bits of dreams in

day-time. But this evening it was different. He felt frightened, as if something bad had occurred, and with a glance round he ran till he reached the end of the glade and the open that led to the house.

He remembered how he had seen that strange figure a little before the old Squire's death, looking back at the last time he had seen it he had to look over and across his father's funeral, and as he came up the steps now into the hall where the butler was lighting the lamps it was almost as though something were following him—something that was warning him of danger to come—maybe of death.

CHAPTER VIII

CHRISTMAS DAY fell on a Tuesday, warm and moist, and with a grey sky threatening rain.

The post had brought a Christmas card from Eileen but no letter, and on the card was just "For Pat from Eileen," whereas he had sent her a gorgeous affair bought at Tuckers in Mamsbury and inscribed "To Eileen from Pat with Love and best Christmas Greetings." All the same the thing had been bought on the spur of the moment —he had very nearly forgotten to send her one but he did not think of this, he felt almost snubbed.

However, where Eileen had sinned her father made unconscious atonement, for James the Mamsbury carrier, appeared after breakfast with a case directed to Patrick Spence Esquire (with care).

Opening it Pat found a gun case containing a Grants twelve bore, beautiful and glossy and new, and Williams's card.

He must have left orders with the gun-makers to send it at Christmas and not before.

By Jove, what a decent chap !

It was just what Pat wanted. The gun room at Compton contained a couple of breech-loaders dated 1906, two old muzzle loading fowling pieces that had belonged to the old Squire's father and in a case on a shelf a pair of duelling pistols by Clark of Dublin—but nothing to equal this superb hammerless ejector—a king amongst guns.

The only black spot on the day was the fact that the Tyrrels were giving a big party and he had to go.

He hated parties.

He had met Dora Tyrrel yesterday with the beagles. She was all mud, and as they parted at a stile at the end of the day, he going back home, she had called out "Remember and be sure to come to-morrow night."

And sure enough he had to go. But he hated parties.

The horrid parsimony of Lord Trevessa in dealing with another man's money had kept his ward not only without a proper car but also not very well supplied with clothes—decent but not fashionable would be a fair description of the garments supplied by Mullins of Mamsbury (who for all that could make the best riding breeches in England) and up till recently Pat did not care, but in town with Williams he had been taken to Wilkinsons of Savile Row, his lordship's tailor—probably the introduction had been due to Williams—and there he had been measured for new evening clothes, for a couple of suits of tweed, and he didn't object, in fact he took an interest in the business.

"Got any white waistcoats?" asked Williams, and receiving a reply in the negative took him to Dale and Inmans, where also shirts were obtained.

"Better have a decent rig-out whilst you're about it," had said the prospective father-in-law, and took him on from there to Lincoln Bennett's and from there to a boot maker in the Burlington Arcade.

Close on a hundred pounds' worth of bills were run up that morning in the space of a few hours, and whilst Eileen waited in the car. "Your uncle won't mind," said the fairy godfather. "I told him I'd see to your clothes, country tailors are no use," and Pat had not objected. Neither had he objected when a fitter came down from Town specially to try the things on. He had entered on the brilliantine stage of his existence.

The grubby hands were gone, socks to match ties had become a necessity.

The cock bird goes through the same stage, and before the bower bird builds a house and dances before it, he has

done his shopping at some mysterious Savile Row in the jungle.

All the same, thrusting his head into his shirt that evening, Pat was not happy. He had dined early—Christmas dinner at Compton in accordance with immemorial custom was an early function—and he was not due to arrive at the Tyrrels till half-past eight, he had lots of time, he had nothing to worry him, yet he was not happy. It was his first real party. His coming out, so to speak. He had been to children's parties, he had been once with the old Squire to luncheon with the Nokes', but this was something quite different.

There was to be a dance, he knew that; yet he knew nothing about dancing, it hadn't entered into his curriculum. Lord Trevessa had never thought of such a thing, nor Mrs. Pounce—nor Scunner Duffield, nor Larry. He had to wear a tail coat and a white waistcoat—ought he to wear white gloves? He had none. Yet he had white gloves in his head—He had read or heard of them—was it the white gloves of the rabbit in Alice in Wonderland or pictures in old Punches of gentlemen with white gloves at evening parties? Well he hadn't any——

When he opened the box of evening ties that were with the shirts they were all "Buds." He could tie an ordinary long black evening tie, but these things! He ruined two—then in a fit of genius and desperation he managed the third—but one broad end stuck up; he managed to get it to lie down and hoped it would stay so.

The rest was easy.

He had no cheval-glass, he tried to see himself in the mirror of the dressing table, and got glimpses of bits of himself, but he couldn't tell whether he looked a guy or not—he hoped for the best, anyhow the tie was sticking down all right.

When he came down to the hall with his overcoat on his arm Mrs. Pounce, waiting to see him off, threw up her hands.

"Why, Mister Pat, you look quite a man," said Mrs. Pounce. "They fit you beautiful."

Pat grunted. He wasn't in the humour for compliments.

The car was waiting at the door with Larry for driver, he got in and drove off.

"It's a big show," said Larry as they drove off. "They say there's a big party stayin' with them for Christmas, and there's county folk no end goin', not that that's much for the county folk round about haven't many young people to their name. Faith it wants new blood like the Tyrrels to give the place a lift up and they're doing it to-night."

"I hate the whole show," said Pat. "Wish I wasn't going—I hate dances—don't know anything about the business."

"Oh you'll larn it quick enough if you take a couple of glasses of wine—punch, that's the stuff to make a corpse dance—Get hold of a geril and twirl her around. It's little she'll care if you've got your arms about her. That geril at the Tyrrels that runs after the dogs, she's the one I wouldn't mind dancin' with meself."

Larry turned in at the drive, passing a big car that had just set down, and Pat giving up his hat and coat in the outer hall passed through glass swing doors and found himself in a crowd and a blaze of light.

The air was full of the buzz of talk and fiddles were tuning somewhere, and the girls looked half naked, and Mrs. Tyrrel was pretty much the same as she received him. Yes, the men were wearing white waistcoats, and his necktie was all right if the right-hand end wasn't sticking up—and here was Dora. Heavens ! she wasn't the same person in this get-up, her very face was changed, but her mind wasn't. She chatted for a moment, saying how glad she was he'd come, just as friendly as when she was in breeches and half covered with mud, and then she introduced him to a girl in blue who had come from near Southampton and

driven her father and sister and brother down, a delightful person who could talk of interesting things and who warmed up Pat so that when the dancing began he danced with her.

"I can't dance for nuts," said he.

"Never mind," said she, "I'll show you—anyone can dance if you listen to the music and forget your feet."

And sure enough he could in a manner of sorts.

She was the first girl of that intoxicating evening.

He had found out suddenly that the women were after him.

It didn't require a chance-heard female voice which he caught saying, "I say, isn't young Spence good looking," to make him aware of that. He found no difficulty in getting girls to sit out with him and he found his visit to London a blessing. He could talk about theatres and things.

A glass or two of champagne did not spoil his pleasure, and after supper somewhere about two o'clock in the morning, this wonderful night which had been rising from height to height reached its climax. Couples were seated on the stairs and he was alone with Dora in an alcove of the big landing. Somehow they had got snuggling up one against the other and he got his left little finger round her right thumb and she didn't mind a bit, nor when he slipped his arm round her waist. Then he kissed her and her lips met his, full and unshrinking.

Then a brute of a man came down the stairs talking to another and spoiling everything, for Dora drew apart and rose up with a great sigh as if she had awakened from sleep and said, "Oh dear me."

"Come along to the next landing," whispered Pat. But she wouldn't, and then another girl joined them, and they were all in the hall and it was time to go, and hot punch was being handed round.

He shook hands with Dora and she gazed into his eyes

withdrawing her gaze and nearly bringing his heart up like a cork to the pull of the corkscrew.

He had two glasses of punch, for some young army men from Aldershot chummed up with him and they all wandered into the supper room to have drinks. He had also a Corona Corona which did not sober him.

But he was quite right when he got into the car, though Larry was pretty well tanked though well able to drive.

"I've had the hoight of a fine time (hic)," said Larry, as they turned into the Winchester Road. "Two ladies' maids, wan on each knee, and them nearly all silk stockin's. Punch begorra with limons and all and as much as you could swalla (hic). Supper with cowld chicken an' a turkey as big as a child, and crackers wid caps for the gerils and love po'tery (hic) a box of cigars as big as a trunk and you free to put your hand in. No damn cigarettes at two bob a hundred got from a bargain lot for the servants. Why, over at the Nokes' would you b'lave me last Christmas when the butler axed me to a party they had packets of bacca same as they give the chaps in the workhouse. But they aren't proper gentry—(hic). Shop-keepers they were, it's as sure as I'm sittin' in this car wid the steerin' wheel between me knees ; their grandfather had a shop up in the Midlands, somewhere or another, and him cuttin' a dash as Lord knows what, and Member of Parliament, and horse racin' (hic) and all the ould families having to set round on their hunkers like dogs at a fair starin' at him and his belongin's."

"Yes," said Pat. He hadn't heard scarcely a word. His mind was in a delightful turmoil, it wasn't till the punch began to fade out and they were turning into the Compton gates that he remembered Eileen.

It seemed to him now that he was engaged to be married to Dora as well. It seemed to him that he had tied himself to Dora. Her lips were still hot on his.

He hadn't thought of her in this way till this evening,

and even then only at the end. It was as if she had been creeping after him behind a hedge—at least with a hedge on one side of him and she behind it.

Well, what was the use of bothering ?

CHAPTER IX

PAT woke up next morning to answer that question, or to try and find an answer for it. He was depressed. His mind was not the mind to stand alcohol with impunity. Leaving that aside he felt in a frightful tangle. The vision of Dora on one side of the bed did not counteract the vision of Eileen on the other side.

He didn't really care for Dora—not that way. So he told himself.

No—but she fascinated him. This runner after dogs, who had suddenly blossomed into satin or whatever it was she was dressed in and silk stockings, had harpooned his imagination.

He could feel her side rubbing against him still, the extraordinary feeling when she returned the squeeze of his finger, the way she sucked in her breath when they kissed, the delicious smell of her shingled head. It all came back to him as he dressed.

He chose a grey tweed suit with socks and tie to match, then as he sat down to breakfast he remembered that there was nothing to be done. He couldn't see her, he couldn't go calling so soon after the party, and there was no meet of the beagles till the day after to-morrow. So he had dressed himself in vain. He started off in the car for nowhere and ten miles beyond Mamsbury had a puncture and had to put on the spare in the rain that always comes on if you are alone and have a puncture. Then he came home to find a letter.

It ought to have reached him yesterday, but in the crush of Christmas letters it had somehow got lost at the Mams-

bury office, and had been found on the floor and sent over by special messenger.

It was from Eileen.

Eileen said that she had sent him a Christmas card and that the weather was very cold and there seemed likely to be skating. She told him she was staying alone with Mrs. Taplow the schoolmistress.

It ended up with a postscript.

"Oh, Pat, I am so miserable. I don't know what to do. I *can't* go on staying here. I wish I was dead."

Good heavens!

He could scarcely eat any luncheon with this thing on the table at his elbow.

He had never thought of Eileen as otherwise than happy.

"Oh, Pat, I am so miserable!"

The words kept repeating themselves in his head.

What on earth was wrong with her? What was she miserable about?

This letter had hit everything, the car, the gun, every blessed thing, even the fried slices of plum pudding in the silver dish handed by Roberts.

The rain had stopped so he took the old rook rifle from the gun room and went out making for the Long Water. There was always the chance of potting a water rat or a stoat.

He came along skirting the trees. There was nothing to be shot at to-day, the water rats were evidently keeping up Christmas at home, and the grey surface of the Long Water showed nothing but a few moor-hens.

Then he came through the woods towards Daddy Ambrose's shack.

Something was bothering him as he came through the woods. Here Winter grey and bare had stripped the trees (nearly all deciduous) and the thing that was bothering Pat was the fact that his subliminal mind was contrasting the woods to-day with the woods of summer. Eileen was in his

mind and her setting of summer trees. He had not noticed that it was winter before till to-day.—At least the bareness of winter had not come home to him like this.

He was thinking to roust out Daddy Ambrose and see what he was doing but the shack was empty when he reached it.

Pat peeped in.

Mr. Ambrose's house had no chimney and no fire-place, but it was so cunningly built that the cold did not come in much and what did come in never troubled him.

His skin, like the skin of a wild animal, was used to the weather. I doubt if even the appalling winters of the good old days would have driven him to take shelter in the Big House, at all events the mild winters of these later years left him unperturbed.

On the bed of dried fern two blankets were neatly folded. By the bed was the box where he kept his stores, and some books on the lid. Everything was neat and in order—but he was not there.

There were no squirrels about. Unlike the squirrels of the wood towards Haydocks, they were hibernating, undisturbed by any enemy. The hedgehog was also absent and it was not the hour for the crows.

Pat, turning from the shack, looked at the little sward where he had surprised Eileen one day as she sat watching the squirrels.

The leaves were green that day and the birds were singing and the hedgehog poking his nose round the corner had seemed watching Eileen and the squirrels.

Such a lot of things gone—and now nothing. Then he turned home.

He would write to her, anyway, and in the library after tea he sat down and squared his elbows to the job.

"Dear Eileen,

Buck up——"

He put down the pen.

Dora Tyrrel had stopped it from writing any more.

It came to him with a shock that he was playing a double game.

He did not put it to himself like that— he just felt ashamed of writing to Eileen cheerfully and telling her to buck up and everything would be all right and he'd soon see her etc. when all the time Dora was there at his elbow, so to speak, Dora whom he had kissed and whose finger he had squeezed —she returning the squeeze.

He took up the pen again and bit the end of it.

Like Buridan's donkey he was between two trusses of hay.

When he looked at Eileen something said to him " What about Dora ? " When he looked at Dora something said to him " What about Eileen ? "

The something had been saying this to him vaguely ever since that kiss of last night, but it was not till now that the question came to him clear and wanting an answer.

And he had no answer.

He couldn't say, " I don't care for Eileen," because he cared for her just as much as ever, and he couldn't say " I don't care for Dora " because her fascination was strong on him, and the urge to cuddle her and kiss her again was powerful as the pull of the Maelstrom.

The pull of Eileen was quite different.

It was the pull of affection. She might almost have been a sister. She had grown on him, her weakness was her most powerful hold, she had him by a hundred little tendrils each almost nothing. Williams had pushed her away from him at first, her new position had come between them. He had cooled to her.

But true affection may seem to cool, may even become hidden by wrath, but it can't be chilled to death or killed by anger.

It is the one and only passion of the mind that is eternal.

The capacity for this affection was the measure of Pat's

soul and of his worth, but it could not destroy the maelstrom set up by Dora.

Anyhow it couldn't inspire him to write a cheerful letter telling her to buck up and be happy.

He tore up what he had written.

CHAPTER X

THE bother was he couldn't tear up the feeling that had made him stop writing.

"Oh, Pat, I am so miserable!" the words kept repeating themselves, whenever he let his mind stray towards Dora. He woke in the night feeling that someone had called him, a voice seemed still singing in his ears, but he couldn't tell whose it was—he fell asleep again and was instantly walking with Dora on the edge of a precipice telling her to keep away from the edge—then she was Eileen and she was telling him how unhappy her life was.

Dressing next morning he was still haunted by this tale of woe of which he could remember nothing but the fact that Eileen was unhappy.

He opened a box on the dressing table where he kept a lot of old things and hunted among them till he found what he wanted.

It was an envelope.

And in the envelope—why, there was nothing—Oh yes there was though—a few miserable brown fragments half dust and a bit of thread, all that remained of the daisies she had picked in the "Gardens" and put in his coat.

The thread was the thread from her skirt which she had used to tie them together.

He saw the Gardens and the sooty trees and the sun on the grass and the children playing and the perambulator containing Horatio J. Skrines. He saw Eileen's old dress and he saw her peaky little face with that curious look about the mouth—not exactly a look of weakness but rather of defencelessness.

His heart came up in his throat with a jump and was

swallowed again. He put the envelope back in the box and finished dressing and came downstairs.

He was unhappy.

He couldn't write, that was no use, why not go and see her ? Go and see her and see Mrs. Taplow and see what sort of place Buckhurst was ? Happy thought. It was only in Sussex ,and he could easily get there in the car. It would take a day to get there and back.

He finished breakfast and made for the library and the maps.

Yes, it was as plain as a pike-staff. Through Winchester, through Guildford, through Shalford to Camborne.

Camborne, that was the place, and looking at the dot on the map he could almost see Buckhurst school, just as he had seen Peter Street on the map long ago with Eileen standing on the steps to receive him.

The thing driving him was not the urgency to see Eileen but the need to relieve his mind. He had no idea of how he was to alleviate her unhappiness, but he had to get to her because his own mind was unhappy.

" I am so miserable." That was enough. He found Mr. Fagan in the stable-yard directing Horniblow on some job in connection with repairs. Larry didn't want to be disturbed, but when Pat told him he wanted the car and wouldn't be back till night he knocked off and getting the key of the petrol house led the way to fill her.

" And where are you goin' ? " asked Larry.

" Camborne," replied Pat. " And you can tell Mrs. Pounce what I've said. I haven't time to find her. Where's that overcoat—give us a hand."

He got in and started.

" Now I wonder what he's up to now," said Larry to himself as he locked up. " Ten to one it's a geril—and more power to him. Yes, gerils is queer things," mused Mr. Fagan as he returned to the stable-yard to supervise

Horniblow and his work. "They're no use without a man and a man's no use without them. Nothing drags a young chap out of himself like a geril—Look at him. Devil a bit he cared a month ago if his boots wasn't cleaned proper, and now if he can't see his face in them there's hell to pay.—Faith, yes, it's the gerils that does the trick."

The car took the Winchester road just as Jane had taken it that day that seemed such an immense time ago.

It was summer then. He remembered the blue policeman he had made to appear from the hedge, but press the car as he would there was no response in this way to-day. Maybe because there was less motor traffic in winter or the spirit of Christianity centring round Christmas had softened the hearts—or the wits—of the trappers.

Winchester let him through without an accident at that bottle neck which is a disgrace to England. He passed through Alresford, Alton and Guildford, without mishap, from Shalford to Redhill and then down south to Camborne.

Here he was at last. He had bought some sandwiches at a ham and beef shop in Guildford, and when he came upon the yellow road sign that told him he was in the parish of Camborne he stopped and attended to them.

Never undertake any serious business fasting.

Camborne is a village that is becoming a small town, the Camborne public school with its red-brick buildings and its hockey grounds and tennis courts has been accountable a good deal for the growth of Camborne, people have come and built bungalows and people come and stay at the Camborne Inn. Tradesmen have opened extra shops in the village and the process of growth once started has kept on. Once you set people flowing towards a certain place they tend to continue to flow.

Pat passed along, driving slowly till he was through the village street, a man at the corner, asked for direction, told

him to go on till he reached the red-brick wall on the right which sure enough showed a gate which showed the school buildings, the courts all deserted and a pleasant-looking house old and ivied and evidently the nucleus of the place and the School House.

The iron gate was easily opened. Pat drove through and shut it again.

Then reaching the School House he rang. A neat maid answered the summons.

Yes. Mrs. Taplow was in. What name please ?

"I haven't a card," said Pat. "My name is Spence, please tell her that Mr. Spence would like to see her."

He was shown into a study where a bright fire burning on the hearth cast its flicker on mahogany book-cases. There were arm-chairs and a bureau and hockey sticks in the corner, and framed photographs of girls standing round cups—evidently the school had a great record that way and Pat was standing looking at one of these groups and trying to imagine how Eileen got on with these great-legged, bold-faced creatures when the door opened and Mrs. Taplow came in.

She was quite young and slender, and she looked at Pat and he looked at her about equally astonished.

He had expected the schoolmistress to be a big elderly woman, something like Mrs. Pounce.

"Mr. Spence, I believe," said she.

"Yes," said Pat, "I've come to see about Eileen."

"Eileen Williams," cut in Mrs. Taplow.

"Yes."

"She's gone ! "

"What ! " cried he.

"Excuse me," she suddenly put in, "but am I speaking to a relation of Eileen's ? "

"No," said Pat. "We are friends, and she wrote to say she wasn't happy—and you—Gone ! where has she gone to ?"

Mrs. Taplow, that much tried woman, had learned to

keep her temper. The fierceness of Pat's question left her unmoved, shortly and succinctly she gave him the news that Eileen had vanished yesterday morning taking nothing with her only the little money she had brought back from her holiday in London.

Pat cut in here to explain that he had been with her during the London holiday and Mrs. Taplow went on.

Eileen had seemed rather depressed after her time in London, but lately, during the last few days she had seemed brighter.

"I had a letter from her," said Pat, "and she said she was miserable, that's why I came."

"We did everything to make her happy," said the Schoolmistress, "though she kept greatly to herself she got on well with the girls, but of course they left for the holidays, after that she lived here and I did my very best for her. She was a strange little thing, not at all as other girls are, but I was very fond of her."

"But where *is* she?" said Pat. "Where can she be—have you hunted for her?"

"Everything is being done that can be done," replied the other. "I at once communicated with Sir Arthur's agent in town. He came down here yesterday, he is doing everything possible and so am I. The police have taken the matter up and are circulating her description."

"She couldn't have started to come back to Compton," said Pat, as if talking to some unseen person. "She wouldn't have known the way."

"Compton, where is that?" asked Mrs. Taplow who knew nothing of the Compton tangle.

"Our place where she stayed," said Pat. "And she wouldn't have gone to London. Where can—Where can—Where can she be?"

He was very near tears.

He got a clutch on himself and stood up on the hearth-

rug with his back to the fire biting his lip. There was nothing to be done here.

Nothing to be done anywhere, other people were hunting for her but he could do nothing. That was the terrible thing.

Mrs. Taplow offered him tea.

He only shook his head.

She might have drowned herself. A girl drowned herself once on the Long Water, he saw her taken out, at least he saw her being covered with a tarpaulin before they whipped him away—he was only seven, but the picture clung.

"Could she have drowned herself?" asked he.

"Thank God no," said Mrs. Taplow. "There's not a lake or a river or anything like that within miles. No, no, no. She will be found all right. Girls are strange things, she was just unhappy losing her father and living in a strange place. Compton—was she with him there?"

"Yes."

"Well, she may have tried to go back."

"How could she?"

"I don't know. One never can tell what instinct will do, at all events she is sure to be found, I feel that. Sir Williams' agent has offered a very big reward. Go back to Compton, see if she has returned there. I will let you know at once if we hear anything." She took his name and address in writing. Then she went out with him to the car, and saw him start.

"He's in love with her," said Mrs. Taplow to herself. "Poor boy!"

She had concealed her own deep uneasiness. The uneasiness of a schoolmistress knowing how bad it would be for the school if any tragedy happened, the uneasiness of a woman for the fate of a child wandering, innocent and adrift, and perhaps mentally incapable in this terrible world where there are so many wolves.

Pat drove.

The short day would soon be closing in. He was racing the sun.

There was a cattle market on somewhere in the Guildford neighbourhood and he was held up and held up, but beyond Winchester he could let the car go.

The last time he had driven on this stretch of road back to Compton was on the evening when he was taking Eileen from Skrines's.

He remembered now the sandwiches and Eileen's momentary grief at having been parted from Horatio J. Skrines and the paper bag he had blown up and burst to amuse her.

But you haven't much time for thinking much less sentimentalising when you are going at fifty-five miles an hour.

This the car did for long stretches sinking to thirty, but rarely below. There was no hurry. If Eileen were safe at Compton, speed would not make her any safer. The only hurry was in his own impatient soul which had swept away all visions of Dora, silk stockings, burning lips and the rest of the allurements of the Flesh and the Devil, cross-road dangers, police traps and straying cattle.

It was after dark when he reached Compton, and running the car into the stable-yard he left her there whilst he sought the house.

"Any message for me?" asked Pat of Roberts who let him in.

"Yes, sir, a note," replied Roberts. "I placed it on the library table."

Pat went into the library and switched on the light.

Ah! there it was, an envelope unstamped—addressed in a woman's hand. News, surely.

He tore it open.

A line and a half:

"Be sure to come to the beagles to-morrow.

D.T."

Dora Tyrrel! It was like a blow on the head.

He tore it up and threw the scraps into the waste-paper basket, then he left the house and made across the Park for the Duffields.

The Duffields were preparing for bed.

Mrs. Duffield opened the door to the visitor.

"Lord, Master Pat, what ails you?" cried the good woman. "Eileen! No, she hasn't been here, but come in—Gone—gone from that school place—yesterday morning."

She stood looking at Pat who had sunk into a chair by the fire.

Her affection for Eileen had never quite obscured the fact obvious to her commonplace common-sense mind that Eileen was Eileen and Pat Pat, and that a union between the two was a thing out of proportion and something that might be disastrous to both. The advent of Williams had made matters worse in her eyes.

Mrs. Duff's father had been in the service of the Spences, and her grandfather. She was proud of the family and she resented Williams as Williams.

That he was a knight did not matter.

The chauffeur of the hired car who had often driven Williams in town knew all about him and had told all about him—

But all this was now swept away from her by Pat's distress and the news that Eileen was lost.

"She couldn't have gone back to them Skrines?" asked Scunner when Pat had departed at last to seek the house.

"Them! never, what put that in your head?"

"I don't know," replied the other, "only if she isn't there where is she? Maybe they might have gone to that school place and stole her away."

"Stole your gran'mother. You can't steal folk that fashion.—I'm sure I don't know, that gel's given me more trouble than if I'd had a family—put that pipe out and don't be lightin' it again, it's bed-time and sittin' here talking won't fetch her—More trouble than if I'd had a family of gels and every one of them running crooked."

CHAPTER XI

NEXT morning about ten o'clock Mrs. Duff with her sleeves rolled up was preparing to make the bread. Haunted by Scunner's words she had been chasing imaginary Skrines through dreamland and finding imaginary Eileens in impossible situations. The unfortunate Scunner hadn't slept much in consequence.

She was taking the top off the great flour drum when a knock came to the kitchen door.

"Come in," cried Mrs. Duff, but no one came.

The knock was repeated.

She left the drum and flung the door open and there stood Daddy Ambrose against the bright winter morning.

"Don't say you've come about Eileen!" cried the lady who knew at once and by the absolute surety of instinct what was at the back of the mysterious caller.

He nodded.

"She's found," cried Mrs. Duff to Scunner, "she's found, here's Daddy—fetch me my bonnet. Don't be standin' there, you gomerel come in and speak for the Lord's sake—Where is she?"

Daddy pointed with his thumb over his shoulder.

He might have been pointing to the Long Water or the woods, but she knew. Eileen was at the old man's house.

She pulled him in and shut the door, and whilst she put on the bonnet which Scunner had fetched and the cloak which hung on the hook by the kitchen door, Daddy told as well as he could.

She had come to him yesterday evening for shelter, he didn't know how she had come all the way from wherever she had come from, she had been unhappy. She wanted

the trees. They had taken her and put her in a house with chimneys and walls and such—the trees——

"Oh, go on with you and your trees," cried Scunner's lady. "You're as crazy as she is. Why didn't you come and tell me last night?"

Mr. Ambrose twisted his fingers.

She opened the door and called him to follow her and they started off.

"Lock the larder door," she cried back to Scunner who stood watching them, "that cat's about and them pigeons will be gone—and there's the custard."

Arrived at the shack she looked in.

There sure enough was Eileen. On the bed of dried ferns she lay covered with a blanket. Her face was flushed and her eyes bright and when she saw Mrs. Duff she smiled—but it seemed an effort.

Next moment the good woman was beside her, holding her hand caressing her, talking to her——

A minute later she was out again.

"Run to Scunner," she cried, "tell him to bring the wood cart and all the blankets off my bed and a pillow—two pillows— Run now, and remember, the cart and all the blankets and two pillows——

"Of all the old fools!" she muttered as he made off, "and her like that since last night!"

CHAPTER XII

"MRS. DUFF," said Pat, as he stood that afternoon in Scunner's kitchen, "can't I see her?"

"No you can't," said Mrs. Duff. "Doctor says she's not to be disturbed, and the distric' nurse is with her."

"What is it?"

"Pneumonia, the doctor thinks, but she'll pull through, but only by nursing."

Pat sat down in a chair by the fire. He knew nothing about pneumonia. He only knew that Eileen was ill—very ill.

So ill was she, indeed, that she had never asked to see him.

Perhaps at the back of her mind was the sense that she had done wrong in running away and that he might be angry—who knows?

He could do nothing. He sat lax in the chair, listless, looking at the fire and listening to the occasional sounds from overhead. To be condemned to sit and do nothing in a case like this, what can be worse than that? especially for a mind active and restless and always on the move.

Mrs. Duff looked at him and then she spoke.

"There's no use in sittin' about and wishin' she was well," said Mrs. Duff. "No more than sittin' before the fire and wishin' there was a joint cooking before it. We have all to lend a hand. Doctor he says we must have brandy in the house. Scunner says to him there's two bottles of brandy in cellar and Doctor says yes, good enough for doctorin' cattle. Get some old brandy from the Big House, and get some champagne, he says, you never know with pneumonia

what you want; it's like a fire in a barn, and maybe you'll want ladders for the roof as well as a pumpin' engin'. So if you're wishin' to be useful," finished Mrs. Duff, "get off to the Big House and get a bottle of the oldest brandy from the cellar and a bottle of the best champagne and bring it back yourself, lest someone might change it—and have you let that woman at the school you spoke of know? Well there, that's like you—send her a tellygram and write to her."

She kept him busy during the next day or two.

On the third day he was let see Eileen but only for a minute and not to talk to her.

She lay there flushed and bright-eyed and breathing strangely, able to smile at him—but oh, how fragile and tiny she looked and without power.

"Dear, dear Eileen," said Pat in a whisper. "No—you are not to talk—you'll soon be well though." He patted her hand which lay on the coverlet, then Mrs. Duff pulled him away and he went, nodding to the patient from the door and blowing his nose as he went down the stairs.

It was the look of helplessness that killed him, and that night far from sleeping he was looking at her as she lay and he was remembering that time in town when he was cold to her, thinking she was cold to him.

Oh, if he could only have had that time back!

He had waited for Dr. Goodfellow's visit that day and the Doctor had said that she was holding her own, "but it's early days yet to be talking of improvement," had said the old gentleman with the stethoscope sticking out of his overcoat pocket.

Early days to be talking about improvement? Why, she had been ill a century. What sort of disease was this?

He did not know that it is the disease that takes a year off the life of whoever loves the patient.

Well, he was to know it before he was finished with the gruelling that had been long preparing for him.

There were days when she was a lot worse, there were days when she was a bit better.

There was a day when in the bitterness of his heart he wrote to Dora Tyrrel and told her all about it, and there was the next day when Dora came over herself and miraculously talked and sympathised with him.

The kiss and those squeezes that had been so much to him had evidently been nothing much to Dora. Most likely she was used to that sort of thing, anyhow she talked to him as she might have talked to a brother in distress, and walked with him from the House door to Duffield's farm and waited for news.

She had never seen Eileen, but she seemed to see her through Pat.

Then came the night of the crisis and the news that she had turned the corner but was very weak.

If she had turned the corner, why were they speaking like that and why couldn't he see her ?

He'd been at it now for eight or nine days, being hit over the head all the time; he was no longer himself, white and whisht and silent.

If Eileen was to die he would go out too. All his impetuous nature had been damned up and pent and lashed to the point that if this break in the fence came it would burst through.

If Eileen died he'd take the car out and send her over the cliffs at Seaborne or take her down Highbury Hill into the great quarry hole.

Mixed with these decisions his mind sometimes sent up heathenish prayers to God.

That was during the day on whose morning they had told him she had turned the corner but was very weak.

Mrs. Duff was boiling a whole chicken down into a cupful of broth for her. She told Pat about it and showed him the broth and made him smell it and taste it.

" Yes, but do you think it will do her any good ? " said Pat craving for assurance.

"Oh, get on with you," replied Mrs. Duff. "Do you think I'd be making it if it wouldn't do her good? What are you talkin' about?"

Next morning at seven when he was dressing a pebble struck the window.

He looked out.

Scunner Duffield was below. He had drawn back a bit so as to look up at the window and as far as he could see into the room.

Pat took a deep breath.

He had been dreaming about Eileen. Strangely he had never dreamed of her once during all this time till last night.

He had dreamed that going through the winter woods he had struck Duffields' lane and here the hedges were all green and the trees in leaf and the birds singing and the walk up to the kitchen door from Duffields' gate was all set with white lilies like the picture of a garden he had seen somewhere.

Tall white lilies on either side of the walk where the cat-mint grew, and at the farm door Mrs. Duff was standing talking to a girl, it was Dora Tyrrel. Here the dream dissociated itself from continuity and sense and the servant with early tea woke him.

But it clung to his mind. It seemed like an omen.

He could scarcely raise the window sash to speak to Scunner.

"Is she worse!" cried Pat.

"Missus sent me to say she's better," replied Scunner. "Been sleepin' all night, an's asked for an egg. I was comin' up to see Larry Fagan about one of our horses, askin' him to look at it, and Missus told me to give you the news."

"Scunner," said Pat, "you can have that gun."

It was his old gun that he was talking about, not the new Grant 12 bore. Scunner had always coveted it. It was forty years old, it knew nothing about ejecting cartridges,

it had hammers, but it could hit and it had "Purdy" on the hammer plate and it fitted Scunner or at least he fitted it. But it was Pat's chief possession as far as sentiment was concerned.

CHAPTER XIII

THE day Eileen came downstairs wrapped in a white knitted shawl to sit by the kitchen fire Pat had spent the morning writing a letter to Williams.

The last fourteen days had made a great difference in Pat.

Despite his faults and failings he had one great quality, the power of affection. Mr. Adams had secured it and could have done anything with him. Eileen had secured it.

In all those runnings away, in all those hours of suspense, during her illness she had become bound to him in such a fashion that it was safe to say that fifty years hence, if they lived that time, this power would be undiminished.

For affection is the one God-born thing that Time cannot alter nor death kill, the one passion that preserves, beautifies and ennobles the life of Man.

Writing to Williams Pat did not mince matters. He wrote as one grown up person to another. He had a right to do so for in the last ten days he had grown ten years older.

His character had formed itself. He was able to think clearly and as never before.

He told Williams exactly all that had happened, all that might have happened and pretty much what was going to happen in the future.

Eileen had to stay with the Duffields. She was happy there, she loved the trees and the people and she was loved in return.

He would wait a year to marry her but not longer.

Pages he wrote, so stamped with good sense and honesty that the Wool man when he received the letter in Sydney laid it down on his desk and took up a cable form.

"Go ahead," said Williams. "I agree to what you say. Will be back some time in the Spring."

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